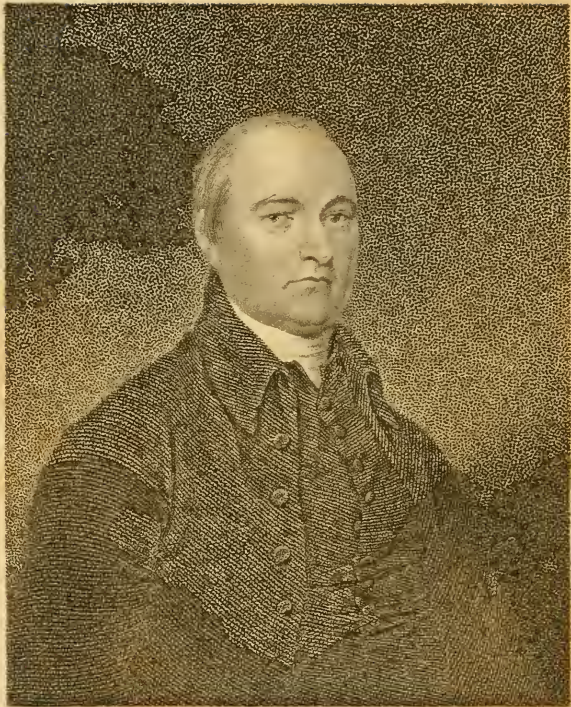




From the Library of
Professor William Miller Parson, D. D., LL. D.
Presented by Mrs. Parson
to the Library of
Princeton Theological Seminary

BX 7233 .D8 1828
Dwight, Timothy, 1752-1817
Sermons



Trumbull Pinch

Lowen

TIMOTHY DWIGHT S.T.D. LL.D.

President of Yale College.

FEB 13 1912

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

SERMONS;

BY

✓
TIMOTHY DWIGHT, D. D. LL. D.

LATE PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

=====
VOLUME I.
=====

NEW HAVEN :

PUBLISHED BY HEZEKIAH HOWE AND DURRIE & PECK.

1828.

DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT, ss.

* BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the 22d day of March, in the fifty-
* second year of the Independence of the United States of America,
* **L. S.** * TIMOTHY DWIGHT, and WILLIAM T. DWIGHT, of said District,
* ***** Administrators of the Rev. TIMOTHY DWIGHT, now deceased, and late
of the said District, have deposited in this office, the title of a Book, the right whereof
they claim as Administrators, aforesaid, and Proprietors, in the words following, to wit:

*“Sermons by Timothy Dwight, D.D. LL.D. late President of Yale College, in
two volumes.”*

In conformity to the Act of Congress of the United States, entitled, “An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned.” And also to the Act, entitled, “An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, ‘An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,’ and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.”

CHA'S A. INGERSOLL,

Clerk of the District of Connecticut.

A true copy of Record, examined and sealed by me,

CHA'S A. INGERSOLL,

Clerk of the District of Connecticut.

E. & H. CLARK, Print....Middletown.

PREFACE.

PRESIDENT DWIGHT, in consequence of an early and permanent injury sustained by his eyes from too close application to study, was able, during no part of his ministerial life, to *write out* his sermons with his own hand. A few of his earlier discourses, as well as a few others prepared for occasions of peculiar interest, were written by the aid of an amanuensis; but almost all of those, which he preached before September, 1805, were delivered either extemporaneously, or from short notes. They were usually prepared in his own mind when walking, or riding, or working in his garden; and, if written at all, were drawn out in the form of a brief skeleton, during the hours immediately preceding the morning and afternoon service of the Sabbath. From that period until the close of his life, the Corporation of Yale College enabled him to employ a succession of amanuenses; through whose aid he wrote his *Theology*, his *Travels*, a considerable number of *Occasional Sermons*, and several other compositions which may perhaps be published hereafter.

The great body of the Discourses, in the two volumes now offered to the public, were originally preached at Greenfield, and were ultimately written out at New Haven. The author, from long and habitual attention to exactness of thought, of arrangement and of language, was accustomed in conversation, in the desk, and while dictating to an amanuensis, to present the conceptions of his own mind in a form and manner so finished, as to need usually few or no corrections to prepare them for the press. This was the case with the following discourses—they are published as written down, with scarce an alteration either from the author or the editor.

The last twelve discourses of the first volume are Valedictory Sermons, delivered in successive years to the members of the Senior

Class, on the last Sabbath of their collegiate life—the Sabbath preceding the public commencement, just before they were admitted to the degree of Bachelor of Arts. Two of these, on *The Nature and Danger of Infidel Philosophy*, have heretofore been published both in this country and in England. A third, that on 1 Cor. ix. 24, has been extensively regarded as one of the fairest models of pulpit eloquence. Three of the sermons were delivered at the Ordination of different clergymen. That on *The Dignity and Excellency of the Gospel*, was first delivered at Milford, in 1785, at the ordination of the Rev. William Lockwood. At that time a manuscript copy of it, without the knowledge of the author, was sent, by one of his friends, to Cowper the Poet. It is the sermon of which he speaks in Letter 137, of Hayley's *Life of Cowper*. The sermon on Jer. viii. 29, entitled, *The Harvest Past*, was probably the most useful, and by many perhaps will be regarded as the most eloquent, of his discourses. At least four or five extensive revivals of religion were supposed to commence in consequence of its delivery.

Should these two volumes be favourably received, it is not improbable that one or two more may hereafter be published.

NEW HAVEN, Sept. 29, 1827.

CONTENTS OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



SERMON I.

Secret things belong to God.—*Deut.* xxix. 29. 9

SERMON II.

God to be believed rather than Man.—*Rom.* iii. 4. 25

SERMONS III. IV. V. VI.

On Revelation.—*Job* xxviii. 20, 21. 45

SERMON VII.

The Sovereignty of God.—*Matt.* iii. 9. 112

SERMON VIII.

God's ways not as our ways.—*Isa.* lv. 8, 9. 127

SERMONS IX. X.

Life and Immortality brought to light in the Gospel.—*2 Tim.* i. 10. 145

SERMON XI.

Tidings of a Saviour, tidings of great joy.—*Luke* ii. 10, 11. 179

SERMON XII.

On a good profession.—*1 Tim.* vi. 12. 195

SERMON XIII.

The danger of opposing Religion.—*Acts* v. 38, 39. 212

SERMON XIV.

On Revivals of Religion.—*Isa.* lx. 8. 226

SERMONS XV. XVI.

Christ loves his children unto the end.—*John* xiii. 1. 244

SERMON XVII.

On Beneficence.—*Eccl.* iii. 12. 273

SERMON XVIII.

On the duties connected with a professional life. Preached to the Candidates for the Baccalaureate in 1796 and 1805.—*Prov.* iv. 20—27. 289

SERMONS XIX. XX.

The nature and danger of Infidel Philosophy. Preached to the Candidates for the Baccalaureate in 1797.—*Col.* ii. 8. 310

SERMON XXI.

Life a Race. Preached to the Candidates for the Baccalaureate in 1799, 1806, and 1812.—1 *Cor.* ix. 24. 381

SERMON XXII.

Ministers and their Converts a mutual rejoicing in the day of Christ. Preached to the Candidates for the Baccalaureate in 1803, and 1813.—1 *Thess.* ii. 19. 403

SERMON XXIII.

On conformity to this world. Preached to the Candidates for the Baccalaureate in 1808.—*Rom.* xii. 2. 421

SERMON XXIV.

On the parental character of God. Preached to the Candidates for the Baccalaureate in 1809.—*Eph.* v. 1. 439

SERMON XXV.

Jacob's Vow. Preached to the Candidates for the Baccalaureate in 1810.—*Gen.* xxviii. 20—22. 476

SERMON XXVI.

The Apostles of Christ our example. Preached to the Candidates for the Baccalaureate in 1811.—*Matt.* x. 5. 476

SERMON XXVII.

- On the love of Distinction. Preached to the Candidates for the
Baccalaureate in 1814.—*John* xii. 43. 496

SERMON XXVIII.

- On Independence of Mind. Preached to the Candidates for the
Baccalaureate in 1815.—*Josh.* i. 6, 7. 515

SERMON XXIX.

- On doing Good. Preached to the Candidates for the Baccalau-
reate in 1816.—*Gal.* vi. 10. 535

SERMON I.

SECRET THINGS BELONG TO GOD.



DEUTERONOMY XXIX. 29.

The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

IN this chapter, Moses solemnly reminds the Israelites of the wonderful works, which they had seen accomplished by the hand of God; and urges them, as powerful motives to faithful obedience. In the succeeding paragraph he foretels the miserable destruction, which would follow their disobedience, in the most affecting language; and thus warns them not to disobey. Both subjects, he knew, would naturally excite, in their minds and in those of their posterity, many curious inquiries and many dangerous speculations, concerning the designs and providence of God. [In the text, therefore, he prohibits all these useless and pernicious wanderings of an unsatisfied and too inquisitive mind; and the doubts, the unbelief, the murmuring, and the revolt, to which they regularly give birth in sinful men.] Secret things, he informs them, universally belong to God; but things revealed, to men.

This singular and important declaration of Moses is not less necessary to us, than it was to the Israelites; nor are we less prone than they were to the vain and mischievous investigations which it forbids. We may therefore well employ our time in

considering its import, and in endeavouring to bring it home to our hearts. To aid those who hear me in the performance of this duty, is the design of the following discourse.

In the accomplishment of this design I shall attempt to show,

1. *In what sense secret things belong to God.*
2. *In what sense things revealed belong to men.*
3. *The End, for which God has made this prescription known to mankind.*

1. *I shall attempt to show the import of the declaration, that secret things belong to God.*

The phrase "secret things" naturally includes, and denotes, whatever is concealed from the eye of man. In the text, however, it is, by being opposed to things revealed, limited to a narrower sense, and denotes only *those things, which might be expected in a Revelation from God, but which were yet withheld by design.* They are, therefore, such things as respect the great subjects of revelation; the character and pleasure of God, and the faith, duty, and salvation of man. It is to be observed, that all things which God withholds, he withholds of design; neither negligence nor accident being applicable to him:

Of these things it is said, that *they belong to God.* By this is intended, that, having retained them in his own possession, and not communicated them to mankind, they are *his property only.* Whoever, therefore, attempts to intermeddle with them, either by making them objects of his faith, rules of his duty, or means or sources of his salvation, plainly intrudes into his possessions; occupies that, which God has purposely withheld from him; and acts, of course, not in conformity, but in opposition, to the divine will.

2dly. *I shall attempt to show what is intended by the declaration, that things revealed belong to men.*

By *things revealed* I intend *whatever is communicated in the Scriptures, whether expressly, or by fair and necessary implication.* The things, expressly communicated in the Scriptures, are those, which are contained in the fair, natural, and obvious sense of the expressions; the sense, which arises, when the words are allowed to speak for themselves, what they most naturally mean; and are not strained to mean more, abridged of their full import and

so made to mean less, nor perverted and so made to mean some other thing, than that, which is conveyed in their natural meaning : when they are not compelled to support an opinion or system, which we love, or to oppose one which we hate ; but are permitted to declare what God intended they should declare. This meaning will usually be found by him, who, with a competent knowledge of language, and a willingness to receive the truth of God, whatever it is, comes to the Bible to learn what is contained in it, and to form his opinions out of its declarations ; but will be very often missed by him, who resorts to it to gain support for a preconceived doctrine, or system.

Things revealed are further *those very things, and those only, which are declared concerning any subject.* If God has chosen to reveal any doctrine *partially*, and to disclose only the certain things pertaining to it ; then these are the only revealed things, which concern this doctrine. We, perhaps, may imagine, that other things are necessary to finish the proper scheme of this doctrine, and to make it more rational, consistent, and satisfactory ; and may endeavour to supply the defect by eking out the Revelation with additional opinions of our own. What we have thus added we may fondly believe to be a proper part of the doctrine revealed. But nothing can be more delusive. The *clay*, which we endeavour thus to unite with the *iron*, will never cohere ; but, however ingeniously moulded, and however carefully conjoined, will still be clay, brittle and perishing.

With regard to *doctrines, implied in Scriptural expressions*, I shall only observe, that *they must be clearly, and certainly implied.* When the inference is clear and immediate, or evinced by a very short and obvious train of reasoning, it may be generally received with safety ; but, when the links are many, and the chain long, there will almost always be danger. Long courses of even *mathematical* reasoning are often deceptive : how much more exposed we are to error in our *moral* reasonings, I need not explain.

Things revealed are said in the text to *belong to men.* By this I understand, that they are our possession and property ; given to us by God for our use, direction, and benefit. They are intended to be the objects of our faith, the rules of our duty, and the means of our salvation. These are the ends. for which the Revelation,

in which they are contained, declares them to have been revealed. They are therefore the true ends ; and are to be regarded as such in all our conduct. Whenever they are pursued by us, we conform to the will of God : whenever they are neglected, we disobey it.

As the things, which are revealed, are the rules of our faith and practice, in order to the attainment of salvation ; so they are the *only rules*. The secret, and the revealed, things in the text include *all* things, which pertain to these subjects. But the text declares, that secret things belong to God, and therefore not to *us*. Things revealed are, of course, the only things with which we have any concern ; in order to become holy, or virtuous, here, and happy hereafter. There is no other character, no other pleasure, of God ; there are no other objects of duty, rules of faith, or means of salvation ; with which we have any concern. If we seek for others ; if we busy ourselves with others ; we shall not obey God, but disobey him. We shall not become more, but less wise, virtuous, useful, and happy.

This will be obviously true, if we consider,

3dly. *The End, for which God has made this prescription known to mankind.*

This is expressed in these words, “ that we may do all the words of this law :” as if Moses had said, God hath withheld all unrevealed things from us, and given to us all revealed things, for this great End ; that we may obey his holy will, made known to us in the Scriptures.

The means or measures, which God is pleased to adopt for the accomplishment of his purposes, are always the wisest and best means ; and such, as if heartily pursued by us, will prove to be in the most perfect manner efficacious. The means, which he has adopted in the present case, are *to withhold some things, and to reveal others*. The things withheld are all withheld of design, and in accordance with the dictates of Infinite wisdom and goodness. The things revealed were, with the same design, and with the same infinite wisdom and goodness, revealed. Had the things withheld, or, as they are called in the text, *secret*, been revealed ; or had the things actually revealed, or any of them, been not revealed, or revealed in any other manner ; our situa-

tion, so far as our faith, duty and salvation, are concerned, would have been less advantageous, desirable, and happy. Had we been taught more, or less; or been taught in any other manner; we should not have obeyed more willingly, or perfectly; we should not have adopted a sounder creed, or a better life; we should not have obtained salvation with more ease, or in a greater number of instances; but should in all these respects have been more exposed to folly, to sin, and to ruin.

Every truth or doctrine, which we know, is attended or followed by many others, connected with it with more or less clearness, or obscurity. Each of these, so soon as known by us, is in the like manner attended or followed by many others. Thus the doctrines, connected in one manner or another with those, which we know, are multiplied, to a degree which cannot be measured, faster than those, which we have already known. Thus, when we have advanced in science, of any kind, a small distance only, other doctrines and inferences, connected with these, are discerned by us in such numbers, as bear scarcely any perceivable proportion to the few which we clearly understand. These often distract us by their multitude; perplex us by their obscurity; discourage us by the difficulty, which attends our investigation of them; and mislead us by the specious but unsound evidence, with which alone we are able to determine their reality, or their relations to the doctrines known. Active and ingenious minds are apt to be bewildered by the mass of confusion, thus presented to their inquiry; while those, who are possessed of less energy, desist from the investigation with listlessness and despair. These evils arrest every man busied in the pursuit of knowledge, when his capacity does not increase in proportion to the number of things, presented to him for investigation: and *this*, after a moderate progress, is never the case with the human mind. Our faculties, we know, never expand beyond a certain limit; differing somewhat in different men, and in the same man under different advantages; but still in all men there is a bound, which none can pass. But the things to be known are literally without number, or degree; and the things, whose existence we are able to perceive, and whose nature, relations, and dependencies, we yet cannot understand, soon multiply, and extend, so as to bear no

perceivable proportion to the extent of our capacity. Hence, all men of enlarged science agree, with a single voice, in declaring, that the utmost increase of human knowledge amounts to little more than to know how few things can be known by us : a decision, necessarily arising from the disproportionate increase of things to be known beyond that of our capacity to know them.

From these observations it is evident, that a Revelation, made to mankind, must, in order to be useful to them, be proportioned in the number and nature of the things, which it discloses, to the human capacity. Were such a Revelation written for *children only*, it must, if it were to be of any use to them, contain, generally, such things ; so few, so obvious, and written in some such plain manner, as the songs, which *Doct. Watts* has, with singular wisdom and felicity, composed for persons of that age. As the real Revelation is designed for *men*, it must in a similar manner be suited to *their* capacity ; and contain such things, and such only, as are fitted to employ and enlighten their understandings, influence their affections ; and direct their conduct, in the happiest manner. It ought, also, to communicate such things only, as will be useful to us ; such as will promote our real interests ; and not such as would awaken or gratify that idle and restless curiosity, which is ever wandering in search of pleasure, and ever uninterested in the attainment of real good. I cannot avoid remarking here, that the Scriptures, being designed for persons of all ages and capacities, are formed with such supreme wisdom, as in their different parts to be exactly suited to the circumstances of all ; to enlighten every understanding ; to move every heart ; and to regulate every life, with the highest advantage.

In a Revelation there are many subjects, whose nature and extent must of necessity surpass the understanding, not only of man, but of every finite being. Such, for example, are the *character and pleasure of God*. As these are in their nature and extent infinite ; they can evidently be comprehended only by the Infinite Mind. Yet of these subjects *even we* can know something ; and that something we absolutely need to know. God has, accordingly, disclosed to us several things concerning them in the Scriptures. As these subjects are in their nature and connection necessarily mysterious : we find our examinations of them attend-

ed, from time to time, with difficulties and perplexities ; and are apt to believe, that, if more had been disclosed, our difficulties and perplexities would have been lessened. This is, however, an entire mistake. Had more things been revealed concerning these subjects, their nature would have seemed more vast, their connections more numerous and perplexing, their consequences more difficult and doubtful, and their mysteriousness, more absolute and discouraging. Our minds, therefore, would in this case have been less satisfied and settled, than they now are ; and the influence of this part of Revelation on our hearts and lives would have been less useful and happy. In our present situation we are prone to imagine, that, if we could see a little farther, and know a little more, we should arrive at certain boundaries, where satisfaction and rest would be obtained ; but did we reflect with only a moderate degree of attention and candour, we should perceive, that our adventures in knowledge are like excursions in space ; where the imagined goal, at which we intend to stop, retires even faster than we advance ; and will continue to retire forever. Thus from the very nature of the case it seems evident, that *the secret things,* referred to in *the text*, are wisely withheld from us by our Creator ; that in withholding them he has placed us in a better situation for obeying all the words of his law, than if he had revealed them ; and that this is one great, and not improbably the principal, reason, for which they are withheld.

That the same valuable end is in the best manner promoted by *the things, which are revealed*, will probably be rarely, if ever, questioned by any man, who believes in the existence of a divine Revelation, and seriously makes the Bible the object of his study. I shall only observe on this part of the subject, that he, who, with a becoming attention and an honest heart, applies himself diligently to this book, will never want a perfect rule to direct him, nor sufficient motives to urge him to every part of his duty.

What our reason thus readily perceives, and admits ; the wisdom and goodness of God establish beyond debate. We know that he designed to promote the good of mankind, by the Revelation which he has given them. That he perfectly knew, what it would be best to reveal, and what to withhold, will not be doubted ; nor that he was perfectly disposed to reveal and to withhold

that, and that only, which was perfectly fitted to place them in the best situation to understand and obey his will, and to obtain their own salvation. Of course, the Revelation, which he has actually given, is formed in the best manner to accomplish these great purposes.

REMARKS.

1. *If the observations which have been made, are just ; it follows, that the Scriptures are a perfect Revelation, and are ever to be regarded as such by Mankind.*

By this I intend, that they contain, to use the language of St. Peter, *all things pertaining to life and godliness*, and that they contain nothing more. Whatever is necessary or useful to our faith or practice, in the attainment of our salvation, is found in them ; and nothing which is not useful. Were any thing omitted or added, they would be less useful, and our situation less advantageous and desirable than it now is. God disclosed and withheld, all that is disclosed and withheld in them ; and that, as his infinite wisdom and goodness directed. They are therefore a perfect Revelation ; and nothing is to be added to them, nor ought diminished from them, according to his frequently repeated commands ; commands founded wholly upon this, their absolute perfection. We are not permitted even to wish for such additions or diminutions. Every wish of this nature is a direct opposition to the divine will, and a direct impeachment of the divine wisdom.

These observations are no less applicable to the *manner*, in which the Scriptures are written, than to the *matter*, which they contain. The manner, so far as it affects the sense of what is written, was equally an object of the divine attention with the matter ; and is equally fitted to promote the good designed. The Scriptures are written for *mankind at large* ; a great part of whom are ignorant of science and philosophy, and of the language of philosophers ; and they are written, therefore, in *plain and popular language*. This language was designed to be understood, in the *plain and popular manner*. If it were otherwise, to nine tenths of the human race they would be unintelligible. From this mode

of understanding and interpreting the Scriptures, we cannot be excused; and all our attempts to interpret them in any other manner, are a mere perversion. Should it be said, in answer to these observations, that the different writers in the Scriptures were, each of them, plainly left to his own mode of expression, as is evident from the fact that they express themselves in so many different modes, and each in his own mode: I reply, that this very variety, in which each writer adopted his own style, is a part of the perfection specified. Each writer spoke his own language in this sense, that he adopted such a style as was natural to him: but in this sense he spoke the language of God, i. e. not the words which man's wisdom taught, but which the Holy Ghost taught; that he used in his own style such words as express the true pleasure of God, in the best manner, most plainly, most exactly, most forcibly. In both these things combined we have, on the one hand, the pleasure of God most perfectly expressed, and, on the other, a clear proof that the Scriptures were written by many hands in different ages and circumstances; while at the same time they exhibit a perfect accordance in all concerning the great truths of Revelation: an advantage, plainly inestimable.

2. *It is equally evident, that it is the great interest and duty of mankind to use the Scriptures as they are, in the most diligent and faithful manner; that the great ends, for which they were intended, may be accomplished.*

Particularly we are required to read them daily, with profound attention, great care, and unceasing constancy; that we may learn their import; that we may understand them in the same manner, learn from them the same truths and precepts, and gain by means of them the same wisdom and excellence, which were designed by their Author. To this employment we are by our interest, as truly as by our duty, required to come with a spirit of entire candour, with humble submission, with a willingness that God should speak in his own manner, and the very things which he has in fact spoken, and without any desire or design to make the scriptures speak in a different manner.

The things, which are contained in the scriptures, are partly *truths* which are the objects of our faith, and partly *precepts* which are rules of our duty, and both united are means of our salvation.

The truths, contained in the scriptures, are in some instances *mysterious*. In all cases of this nature there is usually some fact, or some doctrine, declared concerning a subject incapable of being investigated by us. The fact or doctrine, thus declared, brings up to our view some connection with some other facts or doctrines, more or less obscurely shadowed forth to our apprehension. But the nature of these facts or doctrines, and the connection between them, are either very imperfectly, or not at all, understood. Oftentimes, the nature of the revealed fact it is either very difficult or impossible clearly to understand, and, perhaps always, completely to comprehend. In such a case, we naturally wish to know more of the subject; often feel dissatisfied, that no more is revealed; and not unfrequently set ourselves laboriously to work, to find out something more by the employment of our own faculties. But our wishes are unbecoming, our dissatisfaction blameable, and our labours vain. The doctrine, or fact, revealed, is true and useful; more useful than it would be, if those others, which we wish for, had been revealed also. It is not all the truth respecting the subject; but it is all which would be useful to *us*. We are therefore to receive it in this character, and entirely to acquiesce in the existing revelation, as perfectly wise and good. Thus it is declared, that *Christ is God, the true God, the mighty God, Jehovah, I am*; that he is *eternal, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Almighty, and Immutable*; that he *created all things visible and invisible, that he upholds all things, that he governs all things; that he will judge the quick and the dead, and rewards the righteous and the wicked; that all things are his possession and property; that he forgives the sins of men; and that he ought to be, and is, worshipped and honoured by angels and men, even as the Father is, and ought to be, honoured*. All these things are unquestionably and certainly true, and true in the obvious and popular sense of the expressions; as being written chiefly for those, who cannot understand the expressions in any other sense, *viz.* the great body of mankind. At the same time, it is equally true and certain, that Christ is in some respect or other distinct from the Father, because he says of himself *I*, and to and of the Father *thou* and *he*; because of the different appellations the Father and the Son; and because he is frequently

styled the *Angel Jehovah*, or *Jehovah the messenger*; and a messenger cannot exist unless sent by some other person. Concerning this vast and mysterious subject there are unquestionably many other things, which God, if he had thought proper, might have revealed; which are true, important, and inseparably connected with these; but which are yet not revealed. Something concerning them, and their relation to those which are revealed, is naturally, perhaps necessarily, involved in the existing revelation; yet so obscurely, that we are not able to fasten on the unrevealed things with either knowledge or satisfaction. Some men, impatient of not knowing more concerning these subjects, have laboriously endeavoured to supply the deficiency by the fertility of their invention, and the diligence of their labours. Others, on the contrary, have, under the influence of the same dissatisfaction, determined, that these revealed declarations are not true; or not true in the natural and proper sense of the expressions; and have therefore sedulously applied themselves to find out some other sense, in which they might be true, according to their apprehensions. Both have in my view acted unhappily, and in a manner contrary to the prescription in the text; to true wisdom; and to the real interest and duty of man. That Christ is God, the true God, the Mighty God, Jehovah, I am, is true; because he, who cannot deceive nor be deceived, has said so. For the same reason it is true, that he possesses all these attributes; that he has done, and will do, all these actions; and that he is therefore to be thus worshipped and honoured. At the same time, it is equally true, that he is distinct as a Son from the Father; as the person speaking from the person spoken to; and as the Messenger from Him that sent him: All these things are certain, because God has revealed them; and they will stand immutable and eternally on the basis of the divine veracity. "For the truth of the Lord endureth forever." The one class of these disputants have laboured in vain to shake these truths; and the other fruitlessly endeavoured to extend the knowledge of mankind by adding to them inventions and opinions of their own. In spite of both, the doctrines, as they are revealed, have hitherto stood in the great body of Christian churches from the beginning; and will continue to stand. In

this manner we are bound to receive them ; viz. just as they are revealed.

It is further declared in the Scriptures, that, *Except a man be born again, born of the Spirit, born of God ; he cannot see the kingdom of God.* It is said, also, that he must *be created anew, in righteousness and true holiness.* It is therefore certain, that, unless we are born again, born of the Spirit, born of God, and created anew in righteousness and true holiness ; we cannot see the kingdom of God. In other words, unless a change be made in our original moral character, such and so great as to be naturally and justly designated by such phrases, as *being born again, and created anew ;* we shall never be received into Heaven.

It is further revealed, that, *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.* It is also said, that, *unless we repent, we shall perish.* We are commanded to *turn to the Lord, with all the heart.* *The people of Lydda and Saron, it is declared, turned to the Lord.* We are therefore certain, that the Holy Ghost is the author of the renovation of mankind ; and that mankind themselves do, at the same time, (voluntarily turn) to the Lord. Such a change then, as Regeneration or Renovation, exists in man, and is produced by the power of the Holy Ghost ; yet man is as truly active and voluntary in this change, as in any other conduct. Many questions may indeed be started concerning the nature and extent of the agency of the Holy Ghost in our renovation, our own agency, and the consistency of these doctrines ; which may perplex the authors of them and their readers, and which may never be answered to their satisfaction. Still it will be exactly true, and highly important to us, that we must be born again ; and that by the power of the Holy Ghost, exerted in coincidence with our own agency ; whether we ever do, or do not, know any more of the subject than Nicodemus himself knew. All our doubts, therefore, concerning these subjects, and all our attempts to supply any supposed deficiencies of what is revealed concerning them ; will be misplaced and vain, if not pernicious.

That our *hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*, is another doctrine concerning human nature; and one which is remarkably humiliating and painful. But it is still true, and therefore useful and important; and therefore, also, to be implicitly received.

In the same manner all precepts, which require our self-denial, are humiliating and painful; but they are a part of the will of God, and are of course right and profitable, and to be fully obeyed.

Nor is it enough that we believe, or obey, these doctrines and precepts. We must believe them cordially; because they are true, and right, and good, and a part of the perfect will of God. They are to be inwoven with our daily thoughts, to mingle with all our affections, to become ours habitually, to be ever ready for use, and steadily to control our whole course of conduct. We are always cheerfully to believe, and cheerfully to obey.

It will be unnecessary to illustrate this part of the subject by an induction of more examples. I proceed therefore to observe,

3. *That for the same reasons we are not to be influenced, either in our faith or our practice, by any reference to secret things, or things unrevealed.*

It has been already observed, that these things were *not revealed*, for the very same reason *that others were*; viz. that we might be placed in the very best situation for obtaining eternal life. For this purpose all the proper objects of our faith, and all the necessary and useful rules of our practice, are made known to us.

Our faith, therefore, will be perfect, when we cordially receive every revealed doctrine; and our practice, when we obey every revealed precept. Neither would be perfect, were we to believe more doctrines, or obey more precepts. Whenever, therefore, we are governed, either in our belief or our conduct, by any reference to secret or unrevealed things, we render our belief less sound, our conduct less virtuous, and both less useful to ourselves, and less pleasing to God.

Among secret things, those, which are usually most interesting and most perplexing, respect, in some manner or other, the existence, character and pleasure of our Maker; especially as connected with our final allotment in the world to come. On these,

therefore, multitudes of volumes have been written, and years and ages consumed in study, fear and sorrow, without any real benefit, and with much real injury to mankind.

It is declared in the scriptures, that *God created all things for his own pleasure ; that his counsel shall stand ; and that he will do all his pleasure.* Accordingly we find God predicting a vast multitude of events, hundreds and thousands of years before their accomplishment. Among these are multitudes, inseparably connected with and dependent on the free, voluntary actions of man ; and absolutely dependent on thousands and millions of such actions. Among them, also, are numbers, which may be considered as events of primary importance to the providential system ; events of such a nature, as that, if they had not taken place, the whole system must have been disturbed. and become either chiefly or entirely a different thing from what it has actually been. Of this number are the destruction of the Jewish empire by Nebuchadnezzar ; the deportation of that people to Babylon ; their re-establishment in Judea ; the birth, life, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ ; the publication of the Gospel ; the introduction of the Gentiles into the Church ; and the final dispersion of the Jews by the Romans. That these were principal facts of the divine system will not be denied, because God predicted them, as such, long before they existed. That they were accomplished by the voluntary actions of men will no more be denied. The purpose of God, therefore, and the free, voluntary agency of man ; are perfectly consistent with each other, because truths cannot be inconsistent. Yet, since men have not been able to explain the nature of this consistency ; a thing which God has not thought proper to reveal ; they have both doubted, and denied it ; and have also denied, in some instances, the purpose of God. and, in others, the freedom of human agency ; both of which are abundantly declared, and insisted on, in the scriptures.

It is declared in the Scriptures, that *Adam apostatized from a state of holiness ; and that his posterity have, in consequence of his apostasy, sustained the same moral character.* But the manner and the cause of this apostasy is, to say the most, either not at all, or very imperfectly, revealed. Yet it is to be feared, that many men, of no small reputation, have spent more time in attempting

to explain, and in actually perplexing, this subject, than in gaining the victory over sin, performing their duty, or seeking eternal life.

The conversion of the soul from sin to holiness is abundantly declared in the scriptures. But it is no where declared, that *the time, in which this conversion takes place in any man, shall be known to him.* Of course this time is not by the Scriptures made an object of inquiry, nor is it at all concerned with our faith or practice. It is remarkable, that St. Paul, the time of whose conversion is at least as particularly declared, as that of any other person mentioned in the scriptures, never appeals to his knowledge of this time, as the foundation of his confidence, hope or comfort; but to entirely other evidence; particularly his faithfulness and zeal in the service of God. Yet how many, who call themselves Christians, insist that every convert must of course know the time when he became such; and demand an account of this time as the principal and indispensable evidence of his conversion. And how often, and how unscripturally, is this made the theme of public and private religious inquiries.

That some men will be finally condemned, and that all these will be then possessed of the character of final impenitence and unbelief; are doctrines every where revealed in the Gospel. But it is no where revealed to any person, that *he will be finally impenitent and finally condemned;* this fact is therefore to every man a secret thing; and belongs to God only, and never to man. That he may be impenitent in the end and therefore condemned, every man unpossessed of the Faith of assurance ought to believe; and, that, if impenitent, he will be condemned. But that *he will be impenitent,* no man is warranted to believe; because it is not revealed, and because he is not warranted to distrust, or limit, the mercy of God. Hence no man is bound, or can be bound, to resign himself to final misery, or to be willing to perish. We are required to be resigned to the will of God. But nothing is *to us* the will of God, except that which he makes known to be his will. The final condemnation of no man living has been made known to him by God. This, therefore, can be to him no part of the will of God. Of course, resignation to future misery, if it exist, is resignation to mere misery, and in no sense resignation to the will of

God. But resignation to mere misery is in no degree virtuous, but foolish and mad beyond description.

Universally, whatever is secret, or unrevealed, is to us nothing, and to be wholly unregarded. It is nothing as an object of belief, or a rule of conduct. It can furnish no proof of any doctrine, and no objection against it. The proof of every doctrine must be found in something which we know, and all solid objections against it must be derived from its inconsistency with something which we know. Nothing, which is unknown, can ever affect what is known: nothing unrevealed, that which is revealed. Our true wisdom therefore, our real duty, our rational hopes of salvation, must all be found in that which is revealed; and in a cordial conformity to it in our habits, our affections, and our lives.

SERMON II.

GOD TO BE BELIEVED RATHER THAN MAN.



ROMANS, iii. 4.

—*Let God be true, but every man a liar.*

THIS chapter is justly considered as a dialogue between *St. Paul*, and a *Jew* raising up a series of objections to the doctrines, which had been taught in the preceding chapter. These doctrines the objector supposes to be inconsistent with the tenour of the *Abrahamic* covenant, and the adoption of the *Jewish* nation as the peculiar people of God. In the verse preceding the text, the objector asks whether the unbelief attributed to that nation by the Apostle, will not destroy the faithfulness of God. *St. Paul* replies, “*By no means. Let God be acknowledged to have spoken truth, although every man should be found a liar:*” as every man will in fact be found, who denies the truth of God, or asserts what is opposed to that truth. In other words, “*Let God be acknowledged to have spoken truth on every occasion, although in this acknowledgment we should be obliged to confess, that every man living is a liar; particularly, although every man, who opposes the truth of God, either in his belief, or his declarations, should be found, as in the end he certainly will be found, to have believed, and declared falsely.*”

It cannot be denied that the dispensation, to which the *Jew* opposes the objection in the verse preceding the text, was of a mysterious nature; involving, as the most enlightened members of that nation would naturally judge, difficulties profound and perplexing. No *Jew* could easily conceive how a descendant of *Abraham* could, consistently with the covenant made with that

patriarch, fail of being interested in the blessings of the promised Messiah. But the mysteriousness of this dispensation did not prevent a single doctrine, which it included or inferred, from being true, nor create the least imputation on the Divine veracity.

The doctrines, objected to, were doctrines of Revelation, taught by *St. Paul* under the immediate inspiration of the spirit of God. The answer of the Apostle is commensurate with the objection; and from the manner in which both are presented to us, is plainly and certainly applicable to every objection, made against any doctrine contained in the Scriptures. Whenever a doctrine, found in them, is questioned or impeached; it is always a sufficient answer, that such doctrine is declared by God. Whatever he has said is to be admitted by us, because it is impossible that he should deceive, or be deceived. Our own decisions on the contrary, when employed about religious subjects, are always liable to error, from the imperfection of our understanding and the strength of our biasses. Our understanding in its best exercises discerns obscurely, and comprehends imperfectly, the nature of very many religious subjects; and our biasses, often strong and almost always delusive, lead us to examine and to conclude, with a partiality which is only hostile to truth. While, therefore, the veracity of God contains the highest of all evidence, the fallibility and deceitfulness of the human mind furnish every man with the amplest reason to distrust the decisions of both himself, and his fellow-men.

In general language, the doctrine, taught by *St. Paul* in the text, is this.

Wherever we find the declarations of God on one side, and human opinions on the other, we are universally bound to receive the former, and disregard the latter.

The Apostle, when delivering this doctrine, was conversing with a Jew; a man, who had a divine Revelation in his hands, and professed to believe it. To such a man, only, could the doctrine with propriety be addressed at all. Nothing can be more preposterous, than to call upon a person to believe what his Maker has spoken, who does not admit that he has spoken at all. But to those who possess the Scriptures, and believe them to be the word of God, the declaration in the text is universally applicable with

irresistible force. Whatever else may be false, all that God has declared is true ; and it is to be received implicitly, by whatever human opinions or arguments it may be opposed.

It is not sufficient, that we receive such doctrines as we can explain. The doctrines, opposed by the Jew in the context, were all mysterious, and this was his primary objection against them : but St. Paul answers him, " Let God be true ; but every man a liar." Acknowledge his truth, by giving implicit credit to his declarations ; and in this very acknowledgment confess your own opinions, which oppose these declarations, to be false. To believe a Scriptural doctrine which we can explain, is not to confide in the veracity of God, but in our own explanation. This is not the evidence, on which he originally requires us to believe. He demands that we give credit to his veracity ; and that absolutely, without reserve or qualification. If this be not done by us, our faith is radically defective. Should a friend of ours, known to be an honest man, declare to us a fact of which he professed that he had perfect knowledge, and we should refuse to believe his declaration until we had been able to explain all the circumstances to our own satisfaction ; our friend would justly complain that we had no confidence in his veracity.

It is no uncommon thing to allege the mysteriousness of several doctrines in the Scriptures, as a reason for not believing them. No allegation can be more erroneous, or groundless. In the works of God, both of creation and providence, by which we are continually surrounded, we are presented every day, hour, and moment, with innumerable mysteries. All these we admit without hesitation : and to question them would be regarded as the extreme stupidity of scepticism. All these are works of God. The Scriptures are the work of the same God ; and an account either of the works which he has already wrought, or of those which he will hereafter accomplish. If the works themselves are so extensively mysterious ; the account, given of them, must, in order to be true, be mysterious also. Mysteries, therefore, are so far from being an objection against the Scriptures, that they are of course to be expected in them ; if we suppose them to contain, as they profess to contain, an account of the works of God, they must in very many instances be mysterious, in order to be true.

Hence the mysteriousness of a doctrine infers no objection to it: for plainly many doctrines in a revelation, as is unanswerably evident from these observations, must of course be mysterious. We never think of making this an objection to the reality of the familiar facts, which are continually occurring; nor to the truth of the declarations, in which the existence of such facts is asserted. Nothing can be more mysterious, than *that a body should be moved by force; or the impulse of another body*. Nothing can be more mysterious, than that our own bodies should be moved by the volitions of our minds. Yet nothing is more certain, or more obvious, than these facts; and nothing more evident, than the truth of the declarations in which they are asserted. In the same manner the whole economy of the mineral, animal, and rational, kingdoms is, in each, a continual succession of mysteries. Yet no man, in his senses, even thinks of denying a single fact in this immense field of creation and providence, on this account. How destitute, then, of all foundation for doubt is the mysteriousness of the Scriptures? How contrary to all sound reasoning, and analogy; how opposed to the plainest dictates of common sense; is every impeachment, denial, or disbelief, of the Scriptures, or of any doctrines which they contain, because they are mysterious?

What is mystery? It is inexplicableness. Why is any doctrine inexplicable? Evidently because we are too ignorant to understand it. Is our ignorance, then, a reason, why we should deny the reality of the works, or doubt the truth of the declarations, of God? If it furnish no objection against those works of God, which are familiarly known to us; can it be any reason for doubting those, which are less known to us? Ought we to suppose, that a system of vegetation would contain more wonders than a system of Redemption; that the character of the Son of God would be more easily comprehended than the economy of a human body; that the communication of spiritual life would be more easily understood than the communication of animal life; or that the Resurrection could be more easily explained than the birth of an insect? All these things are in their nature as far removed beyond the limits of our comprehension, as any, which the universe contains. How then, when we find the world

around us filled with mysteries, can we rationally expect, that these subjects, instead of resembling those parts of creation and providence with which we are acquainted, can, amid all their complication, remoteness and sublimity, be distinctly and thoroughly comprehended by such minds as ours?

Nor does *the painful and humiliating nature of a doctrine* furnish the least reason for questioning its truth.

There are innumerable facts in the natural world, which are humiliating and painful. The existence of sin, error, toil, disease, sorrow, pain and death, in their innumerable forms, presents to the eye a catalogue of this nature, which is literally endless. But what man in his senses ever doubted the reality of one of them, merely because the admission of it wounded his pride, or agonized his heart? Every man sees the world around him filled with things of this mortifying nature. How, in the exercise of common sense can he fail to expect other things of the same kind, in a revelation from God?

No declaration concerning the character of sinners can fail, if true, of being humiliating; no declaration concerning their circumstances, of being alarming. Who, unless infatuated, can believe that God regards sinners with complacency; or that, if they die sinners, he will not punish them beyond the grave? These absurdities even the heathen, sinful, erring and ignorant, as they have been, never adopted.

There are multitudes of persons in the Christian world, who, while they profess to believe the Scriptures, in some cases deny, and in others doubt, the declarations which they contain. But there are still greater multitudes, who professedly admit every thing, found in them, and who yet admit many of their declarations, only in the sense, annexed by themselves to the several passages in which they are contained. Each of these has his own interpretation. In this manner the number of such interpretations has become very great: and in very many instances they are various, discordant, and contradictory. Hence, in the mind of a sober man arises irresistibly the momentous question: "In what sense shall I believe this, and that, passage of Scripture? I am ready." such a man will say, "to admit without a question all the declarations of God. But how shall I understand their true

meaning? I see multitudes differ widely on this subject; and among them many, who are ingenious, learned and able. Whom shall I follow: or shall I follow none of them?"

This question is certainly rational, as well as important: and the perplexity, out of which it springs, ought, as far as possible, to be removed by a Minister of the Gospel. The task I will now assume, and endeavour to perform.

To the question itself, then, I answer, that *the sense, in which the various declarations of God in the Scriptures are to be received by us, is the obvious sense: or that, which readily presents itself to a plain man, of common sense, reading them with seriousness and integrity.*

In support of this answer, I adduce the following observations.

1. *The Scriptures were almost universally addressed by those, who spoke, and wrote, them, to persons of this class.*

Moses wrote the Law for the people at large. This truth is declared in many forms. After God had pronounced the decalogue, the people, terrified by the awful splendours which attended the promulgation of these commands, besought him through the mediation of Moses, that they might hear his voice no more, lest they should die. God approved of their request; and commanded Moses to teach them all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which he should command him. Accordingly, Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, "Hear, O Israel, the statutes, and judgments, which I speak in your ears this day; that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them." "These words," said he again unto them, "which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. Ye shall lay my words in your heart, and in your soul; and bind them for a sign upon your hand; that they may be as frontlets between your eyes: and ye shall teach them to your children; speaking of them, when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up; and thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house." In this manner every Israelite was required to educate his children in the knowledge of the law; and in this manner every Israelitish child was to be educated. The law, therefore, was, with absolute certainty, addressed to every Israelite.

When *Joshua* built an altar unto the Lord God in mount *Ebal*, he read all the words of the law to the people. *There was not a word*, it is subjoined, *of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.* In the same manner *Joshua* addressed the words, which God commanded him, to all the tribes of *Israel*, at *Shechem*. In the same manner a great part of the speeches, made by priests, prophets and princes, in the Historical Books, were addressed to greater or less portions of the people at large.

The *Psalms* were not only written for the whole body of the people, but were made a part of their public worship.

The Book of *Proverbs* was written for the express purpose of giving subtilty to the simple, and to the young man knowledge and discretion.

The Prophecies of *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, *Joel*, *Zephaniah*, *Haggai*, and *Zechariah*, were addressed directly to the nation of the *Jews*; and those of *Hosea*, *Amos*, *Micah*, and *Malachi*, to the people of *Israel*.

Our Saviour spoke almost every thing, which he said, to the common people.

Matthew wrote his *Gospel* for the *Hebrew* Christians. *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*, wrote theirs for the Christian world at large. To the same persons were addressed the *Acts of the Apostles*. The *Epistles of St. Paul*, except those to *Timothy*, *Titus*, and *Philemon*, were all written to the respective Churches, whose names they bear; churches, consisting almost wholly of uneducated people. Those of *Peter* were addressed to a large body of people, of the same sort, in the lesser *Asia*; and that of *James* to the Christians among the *Hellenistic Jews*. The first *Epistle of John*, as it is commonly called, appears rather to be a religious essay, or a discussion, than a letter: but it is addressed, generally, to Christians at large; and, particularly, to Fathers, or old men, to young men, and to little children. The second was addressed to the elect *Lady*, and her children; that of *Jude*, to Christians at large; and the *Apocalypse*, to the seven Churches of *Asia*.

I have gone through this detail with a particular design, that the whole subject might be before you; and that you might see

the truth of the proposition which we are considering not in general, indeterminate expressions, but in the several particulars of which it is made up. From these it appears beyond all doubt, that the books which I have specified, constituting the great body of both the Old and New Testament, and containing all the doctrines found in the Canon, were addressed directly and supremely to that class of mankind, customarily designated by the phrases, *the common people*, and *the people at large*. From this fact it follows irresistibly, that these parts of the Scriptures were written in language, which such people could understand; or, in other words, that the meaning of the language actually used, is such, that those, to whom it was addressed, might, if seriously and honestly attentive, apprehend it without any considerable difficulty, or any danger of any material mistake. It cannot for a moment be admitted by common sense or common decency, much less by a spirit of piety, that God has revealed his will to mankind, and yet that the language of the Revelation is such, that those to whom it is peculiarly addressed, should be unable to understand its meaning. It is presumed, that no sober man, addressing his fellow-men on any business of importance, ever used such words as they could not interpret. Far less can it be believed that prophets of God, that the Saviour, that his Apostles, or that any inspired man, disclosing to mankind the will of God concerning their salvation, should discourse to them in unintelligible phraseology; unintelligible, I mean, to *them*. If these writers and speakers have in fact used such language, it was certainly done by design; unhappily, not the design of men, but of the Spirit of inspiration. "For," says *St. Paul*, speaking of himself and his inspired brethren, "we speak not in the words, which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." The use of such language is only to perplex, and mislead; or at the best to communicate nothing to those, who hear. Can any sober man attribute this conduct, or the design from which it must have sprung, to the Spirit of God?

But, if the language of the Scriptures was intended to be intelligible to those to whom it was addressed, it was certainly uttered in the customary manner, and with its obvious meaning. The reason is plain and decisive. These men could not possibly

find out any other meaning, or understand it in any other manner. If, therefore, it was intended, that any other sense, than the obvious one, should be annexed to the words; whatever was addressed to them was addressed to them in vain. Either they could not understand it at all; or they must understand it falsely, unless prevented by mere accident.

2dly. *A great part of the Bible was written by men, who knew no other than plain language, and no other meaning but that, which was customary and familiar. David, Amos, Matthew, Mark, John, Peter, James, and Jude, were all uneducated men: and the same thing is probably true of several other writers in the Sacred canon. It is, however, sufficient for the present purpose, that these were of this character. All the doctrines contained in the Scriptures are, I think it may be safely asserted, found in the writers, mentioned under the former head. All these doctrines, therefore, were originally addressed to plain men. So many of these doctrines are delivered by the writers mentioned under this head, that he, who cordially embraces what they have written, will find little difficulty in believing whatever is found in the Bible. But these men knew no language, beside the plain, familiar language of mankind. The knowledge of uncustomary, technical, or what may be called philosophical, phraseology is an attainment of mere learning; and cannot be possessed by an unlearned man. Hence a great part of the doctrines of the Gospel, so many, as evidently to involve the whole, were certainly delivered in the plain language of men; because they were delivered by those who knew no other.*

Should it be said, that, although these men knew no other language of themselves, yet they may have received the knowledge of philosophical language by inspiration; since Christ promised them, that they should *receive a mouth, and speech, which all their adversaries should not be able to gainsay, or resist*: I answer, that *St. Paul*, in the passage, just now quoted from 1 Cor. ii. 13, expressly declares, that he and his fellow-apostles did not use this language. “Which things, also, we speak, not in the words, which man’s wisdom teacheth.” The things, here mentioned, are in the preceding verse styled *the things, that are freely given to us of God*; and, in the tenth verse, *the things, which God hath*

revealed unto us by his Spirit, i. e. the things, which were revealed to Paul, and his fellow-apostles, by the Spirit of inspiration. These things, the Apostle declares, they did not speak in words, taught by man's wisdom, or human philosophy. As this is true of the New Testament; so it is beyond all controversy equally true of the Old.

3dly. *The Scriptures were written, chiefly, for plain men.*

This I argue from three considerations.

The first is, that these constitute altogether the great body of mankind, and are immensely disproportioned in their numbers to all the rest. The souls of all these are, severally, of as much value, as those of the great and learned. From their numbers therefore it is reasonably concluded, that God in revealing his will, and publishing the way of Salvation, had a primary reference to those who were immeasurably more important to his eye, than all others.

Secondly. *The Scriptures directly exhibit this truth to us.* St. James, censuring the particular respect, paid to the rich and great by the Christians to whom he wrote, says, "Hearken, my beloved brethren; hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?" Christ declared to the people of Nazareth by a quotation from the Prophet *Isaiah* his own character and mission, in these remarkable words, "The SPIRIT of the Lord God is upon me: for he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor." When the disciples of *John* came, to inquire whether *Jesus* was the *Messiah*, or not; he gave it, as one decisive proof of his character, that *the poor had the Gospel preached to them.* Almost all his labours were employed on plain, humble people. Such persons were his companions: such were his Apostles.

Thirdly. *Persons of this class have, much more extensively than any other, believed and obeyed the Scriptures.* The common people, we are told, heard Christ gladly: and of them almost all his converts were made. Often they were his only defence against the malicious designs of their superiours. Several times, it is said, *they would have laid hands on him, but did not, for fear of the people.* The Apostles found the same defence: and almost all their converts were of the same class. What was true of those

periods has been true of all, which have succeeded. From the remains of the early Fathers in the church, particularly of *Clement*, *Ignatius* and *Polycarp*, it is unanswerably evident, that they, and the Christians, generally, of their time; Christians, distinguished for *simplicity and godly sincerity*; who *had their conversation in the world, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God*; adopted no other mode of construing the Scriptures. These men were, generally, the plain inhabitants of the several countries in which they lived; and by their piety and benevolence in life, and their meekness, patience and fortitude, in death, proved to every succeeding age, that they were *precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold*. Of the same character were the great body of Christians in the second and third centuries; the numerous converts of *Augustine*; those of *Bernard*; the *Waldenses*; the *Hussites*; and the great body of converts, made at, and after, *the Reformation*. Generally, these have been almost all the Christians in every age of the Church.

But it is reasonably believed, that the Scriptures were especially written for those, who, it was foreseen, would embrace and obey them.

4thly. *The doctrines, formed by the obvious meaning of the Scriptures, are the only doctrines which have spread vital Religion in the world.*

Those, who heard the Apostles preach, and their successors through the two first centuries, and the earlier parts of the third, were almost universally incapable of annexing any other meaning than the obvious one, to the declarations of the Scriptures. This is the only character, given them, both by their friends and their enemies; and is therefore unquestionably their true character. It is hardly necessary to mention, because so well known, and so universally acknowledged, either the vast multitude of these Christians, or the preeminent excellence of their character. In the numerous instances in which Religion prevailed in the succeeding ages of the Church, it prevailed, solely, by the preaching of the very same doctrines. This was true, particularly, with regard to the prevalence of Religion in *Egypt*, under *Dionysius* and *Athanasius*; in *Africa*, under *Cyprian*, *Augustine*, and *Fulgentius*; in *Italy*, under *Ambrose*; under the *Gregorys* in the *Lesser Asia*;

under *St. Bernard*, also, in *France*; the numerous followers of *Peter Waldo*, and of *John Huss*; those of *Wickliffe*, also; and the very numerous Christians among *the reformed* in the various protestant countries. To these may be added the numerous Christians found in this country, from its early settlement; and the vast multitude, which in many protestant countries between the years 1730 and 1760, became public professors of Religion. Let any man employ himself in reading diligently Ecclesiastical History, particularly that branch of it which records the prevalence of practical piety; and he will see irresistibly, that, when these doctrines have been preached and believed, vital Religion has flourished; when they have not, it has regularly decayed. Such has always been the fact heretofore. Such is the fact at the present time.

If I am asked on what ground I assert, that the persons, of whom I have spoken, were vitally religious; and that others were not; I answer, on that, which the Scriptures have made the evidence of vital Religion: *the conduct of the respective classes of men*. "By their fruits," says our Saviour, speaking of those who are not Christians, "shall ye know them." Those, who have embraced these doctrines, have in a manner honourable to human nature adorned the doctrine of God, their Saviour, by bringing forth those fruits, which, he declares, spring from Evangelical repentance, faith, and holiness. Of this fact, as it respects the early ages of Christianity, there can be no debate; nor, it would seem, as it respects the Reformers and their followers. There is as little reason to doubt it concerning the great body of Christians, who have followed *them*; even their enemies themselves being judges. Even by these multitudes, who have held the doctrines in question, they are daily declared to be truly religious, and placed among the best of mankind. On this subject, however, I cannot expatiate; but will conclude my observations concerning it by a quotation, or two, from distinguished adversaries of these doctrines. One of these, *Robert Forsyth, Esq.* a learned civilian and a professed Infidel, says, "There is one remark, which we think ourselves bound in justice to make, although it appears to us to be somewhat singular. It is this; that from the earliest ages down to our own days, if we consider the character of the ancient *Stoics*, the

Jewish *Essenes*, the modern *Calvinists*, and *Jansenists*, when compared with that of their antagonists, the *Epicureans*, the *Sadducees*, the *Arminians*, and the *Jesuits* ; we shall find, that they have excelled, in no small degree, in the practice of the most rigid and respectable virtues ; and have been the highest honour of their own ages, and the best models for imitation to every age succeeding.”

Doct. Priestly, also, acknowledges, that “ those, who hold these doctrines, have less apparent conformity to the world, and seem to have more of a real principle of Religion, than his own followers ; and that those, who from a principle of Religion ascribe more to God and less to man than other persons,” (the distinguishing characteristic of these men) “ are men of the greatest elevation of piety.” But, if these doctrines have, and others have not, produced this mighty effect in the successive ages of the Church ; it is, I think, clearly certain, that they are that truth of God, which Christ declares makes men free from the bondage of sin, and which, St. Paul declares, *are the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*. In other words, they are the genuine doctrines of the Gospel.

5thly. *The Scriptures are actually written in such a manner, that their obvious meaning is their true meaning.*

Every *rhetorical* critic, perplexed with no theological debates, and having no religious system to support, has remarked, that the language of the Scriptures is distinguished from all other books by its simplicity ; its native, uncontrived character ; its accordance with the most artless speech of men. It would have been impossible for this opinion to have been universal, had it not been founded in fact. In perfect accordance with it, every man, who reads the Scriptures without any particular design, and allows his own views and feelings to take their natural course, feels this truth irresistibly. Every such man feels, that he has never met with any other writings, which were so remarkable for a manner so artless, and so purely natural. Particularly, every plain man here finds himself entirely at home ; converses with those, who speak in the manner to which he has been used from his infancy ; and sees facts, and doctrines and precepts, presented to him with a plainness which is elsewhere unrivalled.

The Scriptures themselves long since declared this to be their true character. The Wisdom of God, or, in other words, Christ, says, Prov. viii. 8, 9, "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness: there is nothing froward, or perverse, in them. They are all plain to him, that understandeth; and right to them, that find knowledge:" i. e. "there is nothing in my words, that is writhed or twisted; nothing perplexing; but they are all plain to him who possesses that understanding, which consists in the fear of the Lord." The Prophet *Isaiah* says, That, when "a king," (i. e. Christ,) "shall reign in righteousness, The eyes of them, that see," (i. e. of Christians, or pious men) "shall not be dim. The heart of the rash, shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly." In other words, Christians shall understand distinctly the things of Religion; and those, who before spoke of them indistinctly and obscurely, shall then be able to speak, and shall actually speak, in a manner clear and very intelligible.

The same prophet also says, that under the dispensation of the Gospel, "the way of holiness shall be an highway; and that way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Of the same period he declares, that "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun seven-fold." A multitude of other passages, of the same import, might easily be added to these, were it necessary. All plain Christians have in every age and country, found these declarations completely verified in the satisfaction, comfort, peace and hope, which they have found in the invitations and promises; in the direction of their duty furnished by the precepts, and in the enlargement of their religious knowledge produced continually by the doctrines. These benefits are experienced and declared, even by those of the humblest character; even by children and servants: and it is remarkable, that those, who have found difficulties in such passages of Scripture as especially direct the faith, practice and hopes, of mankind, have not found these difficulties *in the want of an obvious meaning, but in their own unwillingness to receive that meaning, and in their wishes to find out some other which would better suit with their own preconceived opinions.*

To the observations, under this head, two objections may no

improbably be made. The first is, *that much of the Scriptural language is figurative, and therefore obscure*: the second, *that several subjects, and particularly doctrines, declared in them, are profound and mysterious; and demand the greatest human understanding to comprehend them.*

Concerning *the former* of these objections I observe, that, although the language of the Scriptures is extensively figurative, it is not for that reason obscure. Figurative language, when used according to the dictates of nature, is scarcely at all less obvious, or less easily understood, than that which is literal. Savages and little children use figurative language more than any other persons; and yet all, which they use, is perfectly understood by other savages, and other little children, to whom it is addressed. All the figures, employed in the Scriptures, are those of mere nature; and are, therefore, easily explained by the mind of every one who knows the language of nature. The figurative phraseology in the Bible, which is obscure, is not that which the writers intended to use; but that, which is made figurative by those who comment on their writings.

Concerning *the latter* objection I observe, that the doctrines and precepts necessarily connected with salvation, are unattended with any difficulty, except what arises from our inclinations. Many doctrines, actually revealed, are inexplicable in their nature; and many others, in their antecedents, attendants and consequents. They are connected with many things, their connection with which is inexplicable. In both classes we may find or make difficulties: but the difficulties do not arise in the proper sense from the revelation, but from our curiosity. I will illustrate this assertion by an example. We are taught, that *the soul will exist in a separate state.* There is no difficulty in admitting the truth of this declaration; nor any want of evidence, that it is true; because it is a declaration of God. But if we suffer our curiosity to wander in a series of inquiries, in order to find out where, what, and how long; we may easily meet with so many, and so great, difficulties, that we may be ultimately induced, as others probably have been, to reject the doctrine altogether. We are taught, that there will be a resurrection: and our understanding easily receives the instruction. But the single question, "will the same

body rise?" may easily involve us in a sufficient number of perplexities to cast extreme obscurity over the resurrection itself, and persuade us, with *Hymeneus and Philetus*, to say *that the resurrection is past already*. All such difficulties arise, not from the thing revealed, but from the philosophical curiosity with which it is investigated by ourselves. Let it ever be remembered, that the decisions furnished by this investigation, are never matters of faith, and never obligatory upon the conscience; and that the investigation itself is very often perplexing as well as idle, and mischievous as well as useless. He, who will be contented to take his Maker at his word, will rarely find himself embarrassed. But, in order to do this, he must be prepared to yield up every opinion of his own to the declarations of God.

To exhibit the justness of these views, I observe, that the religious part of the Christian church has adopted a single system of doctrines, from the Apostles' days to the present time. The observing reader of Ecclesiastical History will find this truth irresistibly forced upon him, as his eye is passing through the annals of Christianity. The most remarkable example of it is presented to us by *the almost absolute harmony of the confessions, and creeds, adopted by the several Protestant countries*. Christians, therefore, have in every age and country found the language of the Scriptures sufficiently plain, and the meaning sufficiently obvious, to unite in the construction of the former, and the adoption of the latter. Nor have they felt any very material embarrassment, either from the figurative nature of the phraseology used by the writers, or the profoundness of the doctrines which they have disclosed.

But the meaning, adopted by the great body of Christians, in the several ages of the church, is beyond all reasonable doubt the true meaning. It cannot be supposed, that God would leave his children, as a body, materially to mistake the meaning of his word; nor cause his word to be so written that they would of course mistake the meaning in this manner, while reading it with diligence, integrity and reverence. But, if the obvious meaning be not the true one, both these suppositions must, so far as I can see, be admitted.

6thly. *If the obvious meaning of the Scriptures be not the true*

one; the great body of mankind could not reasonably be reprov'd, or threatened for not believing them.

To believe the Scriptures is to believe their meaning. But the persons in question are unable, however inclined, to annex any meaning to them, beside the obvious one. To believe them, therefore, would in most cases be out of their power; and could deserve neither threatening, nor reproof. Yet every reader of the Bible must have seen very many instances, in which this unbelief is severely censured, and terribly threatened. *He, that receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word, that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.* How can this be, if such, as are concerned, cannot know what the words of Christ mean? How can they be blameworthy for not believing what, in the physical sense, they cannot understand?

7thly. *If the obvious meaning be not the true one; the provision, made in the Scriptures for the salvation of men, is imperfect and ineffectual.*

Every meaning of every scriptural declaration, which is not furnished by the plain, obvious construction of the words, must be derived from *critical learning and ingenuity*. How few are there, how few have there been, so learned and so ingenious as to be able to persuade mankind, or to give them any solid reason for the persuasion, that they, and they only, have certainly discovered the meaning of the word of God? Where, when, and who, have been these favourites of heaven?

These men, also, must be supposed to be *more able, or better inclined, than God himself, to use language in a manner, entirely perspicuous and decisive*. Where, and when, have such specimens of ingenuity and critical skill existed?

They must, also, be supposed to *unite in giving the same construction to Scriptural passages*. The true sense of each passage is certainly but one: and all, who discover it, must therefore be absolutely agreed. Where do we find this agreement?

They must, also, *possess sufficient weight and authority, to engage the attention, and secure the submission of mankind to their decisions*. Who ever had this authority?

Contrary to all this, the Scriptural critics, who have actually existed, have never had sufficient learning and skill! to create a be-

lief among men of piety, that their doctrines, when varying from the obvious meaning of the Scriptures, have been true, or supported by satisfactory evidence. Some of them have been men of real talents and extensive learning. Others have challenged to themselves such talents, and attempted to display such learning, with not a little ostentation; but have never been able to convince mankind, that they possessed this superiority of character. Nor have *either* had any considerable success in gaining followers, except among those who were plainly unwilling to follow Christ.

At the same time the language, in which they have delivered their opinions, has been less clear, definite and satisfactory, than that of the Scriptures. Technical, or philosophical, language is certainly capable of being so used, as to express the doctrines of mere Philosophy, and the truths of Science, appropriately so called, especially of physical science, with more precision than the common language of men. Had the theology of the Scriptures been intended only for learned men, and disclosed merely as a science, which was to expand their views and regulate their opinions; it is not improbable, that it might have been communicated in technical language. But it was actually intended for all men, and must, therefore, be made known to them in the common language of men; since nine hundred and ninety nine, out of a thousand, could not possibly understand any other. For the communication of plain doctrines, duties and facts; the only things interesting to such men, as being the only things essentially to be believed and done by them; the common language is incomparably better fitted, as being more perspicuous and more impressive than any other. Who does not perceive; who has not a thousand times felt; that the doctrines, precepts and facts, contained in the Scriptures, are there expressed with incomparably more felicity, than in the most studied periods and the most nicely selected phraseology, of the ablest uninspired writers.

The writers in question, also, have agreed almost in nothing; and have differed endlessly about every thing. It is not difficult for men to harmonize in the truths of physical science; because they ordinarily excite no interest; awaken no passion; and generate no bias. But the doctrines and duties of Religion produce the strongest interest; and start into action every feeling, and

every prejudice. Hence, the views of different persons concerning them are variously and wonderfully warped from each other, and from truth. Hence also, the very language, which they adopt in communicating their opinions, is often perverted by them, and is used variously, and in a manner, chiefly, or only, perplexing to their readers.

On the innumerable diversities of opinion among these writers it is unnecessary to expatiate; because it is every where known, and acknowledged. A single example will sufficiently exhibit it for the present purpose. *St. Paul* says in so many words, that *Christ is over all, God blessed forever*. This plain, unambiguous declaration conveys one, and only one, obvious, and that a perfectly definite, meaning. In equally express terms, *Christ* calls himself *a man*, and *the Son of Man*. The obvious meaning of these declarations has been denied by several classes of men, who have called themselves Christians. The *Cerinthians*, *Ebionites*, *Socinians*, and *others*, believed him to be only a man. The *Docetæ*, and *Manichees*, believed him to be only God. The *Sabellians* believe him to have been a mere manifestation of God. The *Arians* believed, that he was a super-angelic being, created before any other creature: and the followers of *Apollinaris* held, that he was two distinct Persons; one divine; the other human. Who, amid this diversity, would be able, should he desert the plain meaning of Scripture and follow the explanations of men, to adopt any opinion concerning this subject?

Nor have such writers possessed, nor can any writers possess, such weight, and authority, as might secure the submission of mankind to their decisions. The declarations of uninspired men can rise no higher than *opinion and advice*; their precepts, than *recommendations*, nor their promises and threatenings, than mere conjectures. Whatever they threatened or promised although professedly derived from the Scriptures would be believed, as it always has been believed, to be merely an imposition, or the dream of a distempered brain. So far as God was supposed to have spoken, it would be received as truth; so far as it was only the comment of an uninspired man, it would be regarded, and with unobjectionable propriety, as doubtful or false. Who, after reading the comment, would not ardently wish for a sight of the text:

that he might know how the doctrine or the precept, the threatening or the promise, appeared, as it came from the hand of God?

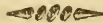
From these observations it is, I think, certain, that, if the obvious meaning of the Scriptures be not the true one, *the provision, made in them for the salvation of men, is imperfect and ineffectual*; that men could not know what to believe, what to fear, or what to hope; but would be left in that state of suspense, which in a case of such immense moment must, if seriously felt, be productive only of anguish, and terminate only in despair.

I have now finished the observations, which I have thought it proper to make on this highly interesting subject. As I have never heard, nor seen, it discussed; and as it deeply concerns every person, who is in possession of the Scriptures; I shall consider myself justified in having examined it at length. If the arguments, here adduced, have the same weight in the view of my audience, which they possess in my own; they will be satisfied, that *all the declarations of God in the Scriptures are to be implicitly received; and that they are to be received in their obvious meaning.*

SERMON III.

ON REVELATION.

MAN CANNOT FIND OUT A RELIGION WHICH WILL RENDER
HIM ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. SERMON I.



JOB xxviii. 20, 21.

Whence then cometh wisdom ; and where is the place of understanding ? seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living.

THE meaning of the word, *Wisdom*, as it is used here, and elsewhere, in the Scriptures, is given to us in the 28th verse of the context. “And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.” Without any comment it will be seen, that the fear of the Lord, and departure from evil, constitute what is meant, originally, by *the Religion of the Scriptures*. By this I intend that reverence and obedience to God, without which no Intelligent being can be supposed to please him, or be accepted by him. This is the religion of angels : this was the religion of *Adam* in a state of innocence.

The context is almost wholly a panegyric upon this moral character : and with a force and beauty unrivalled, it is exhibited, successively, as undiscoverable by man ; superior to all things, which he has discovered ; incomparable, and inestimable, in its value ; and so glorious in its excellence and importance, that its fame has extended to the regions of *destruction*, and reached the ears of the *destroyer*. It is exhibited as the mighty and supreme concern of God himself ; as peculiarly occupying his thoughts, and engrossing his attention, amid all his wonderful works of creation and providence ; and, in the end, as solemnly announced by him in a public proclamation to the children of men.

In the text this religion is declared *to be hidden from the eyes of all living*. In other words, it is incapable of being discovered by man. This doctrine I propose to make the theme of the present discourse ; and shall express it in the following terms : viz.

THAT MAN CANNOT FIND OUT A RELIGION, WHICH WILL RENDER HIM ACCEPTABLE TO GOD.

In support of the truth, contained in this declaration, I observe,
1st. *That man without the aid of Revelation is ignorant of God.*

I shall not, here, discuss the question, whether in the physical sense it is possible for man to discover the existence, and attributes, of his Maker. The investigation would occupy more time than I am at present able to devote to it : nor is it at all necessary for my present purpose. It will be sufficient to show, at the present time, that man never would make this discovery. The fact, that these things are hidden from the eyes of all living, so far as an original discovery is concerned, will be all, that is necessary for my design : and the inquiry, whether the ignorance in question proceeds from a moral or physical source, will, here at least, be nugatory.

That mankind would have never, originally, discovered the existence and attributes of God is in a very high degree probable, because ancient history furnishes no instance of this nature. Amid all the inquiries and discussions on this subject, which have prevailed in former periods of the world, and indeed in every period, it is incredible, if an individual had been so happy, as to alight on so important a discovery, that no record and no hint concerning it should have been transmitted to succeeding ages. But no such record, no such hint, exists. Every discussion, every observation, concerning this subject is evidently founded on acknowledged preceding information. Such a fact could scarcely have existed, had men derived this knowledge merely from the employment of their own faculties.

The same truth is evident, also, from the consideration ; that certain nations have finally lost all knowledge, and all belief, concerning the existence of a God. It must, I think, be admitted on the testimony of respectable Missionaries, that several tribes of *Caffres* are entirely ignorant of the existence of any superintendent being. The same thing is ascertained concerning various

other nations. I shall not, here, inquire into the truth of the assertion. The case specified is sufficient.

It will not be denied, that the idea of God is the most important and distinguished among all those which are received by the human mind ; and therefore, so far, the most difficult to be lost. The only explanation, which can be given of the fact, *that it has been actually lost*, must be sought for *in the indisposition of man to retain it*. Nothing is more evident than that beings, who voluntarily lose the idea of God, would never regain it, after it was once lost.

The same truth is further evident from the universal declension of mankind into Polytheism. Every polytheistic system contains, of course, the idea of a being, who superintends, in some manner, the affairs of this world ; and unites with him in this station, or employment, a greater or less number of others. But these beings, in every such system, are infinitely different from the real God. Polytheists cannot be said absolutely to have lost the knowledge of God ; but they must be said to have lost, absolutely, his true character. All the gods of Gentilism have been imperfect, and immoral : characteristics, directly contradictory to the perfection of JEHOVAH. As this fact has been invariably true of that system, in every age, and country ; it furnishes unanswerable proof that the mind of man has, upon the whole, no tendency to retain the true God, but is perpetually prone to wander from the knowledge of his character, until it is finally lost in the absolute ignorance of his being.

The efforts of philosophy yield strong, additional evidence of the same truth. Men, addicted to philosophy in ancient times, and frequently possessed of superiour talents, studied and discoursed very extensively concerning this subject ; and, to make their discourses able, ingenious, and satisfactory to their readers, they employed, vigorously, their time, talents, and labours. What was the result ? Most of them were Polytheists ; some were Sceptics ; and the rest were Atheists. Those, who were Polytheists, acknowledged universally the gods of their countrymen ; limited in their powers and operations, odious by their vices, and contemptible by their follies. Not a virtuous being was found in their number. Their enjoyments were the gratifications of pride, passion, and appetite ; and their moral conduct such, as a sober man must

regard with disgust and horror. When they spoke of God in the singular number, they declared, that he was fire ; a compound of the four elements ; the sun ; the soul of the world ; the universe ; the ether ; and heaven.

On the doctrines of the Sceptical, and Atheistical, philosophers it will be unnecessary to expatiate.

Such were the opinions, which the mind of man, uninspired, and employing its most vigorous powers in the contemplation of this subject, has adopted concerning its Maker. Who will not readily believe, that the true reason, why such opinions were adopted by intelligent men, was, that they did not like to retain God in their knowledge ?

Another fact, connected with these, and evidential of the same truth, is this ; the descendants of men, who once had just apprehensions of the Creator, became universally Polytheists.

Noah, and his family, knew, and worshipped, the true God ; yet all their descendants were polytheists : the *Jews*, partially, and at times ; the rest, within a moderate period absolutely. The subjects of *Melchisedek*, and the first *Pharaoh* mentioned in the Scriptures, were acquainted with the true God ; as were also *Job*, and his *friends* ; and, undoubtedly, those around them. The people of the *Thebais*, also, at a much later period worshipped one God. But all, who followed these at a little distance of time, became Polytheists. Whence could this fact be derived, unless from the indisposition of man to retain the knowledge of his Maker ?

The *Jews*, *Mohammedans*, and *Christians*, have, all, as it is well known, obtained all their just apprehensions concerning this subject from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

From the same source modern Deists have acquired all *their* knowledge of this subject. Whenever these men have departed, as they have ever been disposed to do, from the Scriptural doctrines concerning it, they have invariably invaded and diminished the infinite perfections of JEHOVAH. He, who reads the things which have been said by *Herbert*, *Tindal*, *Chubb*, *Hume*, and others, particularly by *Bolingbroke*, whether directly or indirectly, concerning the Creator, will find satisfactory reasons for believing, that, were the Scriptures once removed out of the way,

Infidels would within a short time revive the superintendency and worship of the *Grecian* and *Roman* Deities. *Gibbon* directly censures the *Jews* for not uniting their worship with that of JEHOVAH: and *Taylor* has publicly professed himself a Polytheist.

From each of these facts it is strongly evident, and from all of them together, unanswerably certain, that, mankind receive the existence and character of God universally with reluctance; lose it, unless continually forced upon them, regularly, as well as easily; and as regularly embrace either Polytheism, Atheism, or Nihilism. Without Revelation, therefore, they become of course ignorant of God.

As all religion has its foundation in the existence and character of a god; and all true religion, in the existence and character of the true God; it is perfectly clear, that in these circumstances men are incapable of forming a religion, which will render them acceptable to God.

2dly. *Mankind are incapable of devising a system of Duty, which will render them acceptable to God.*

The decisive proof of this proposition is found in the fact, that, hitherto, they have never devised such a system. The ancient philosophers applied themselves to this subject with intense labour, in a vast multitude of instances, and through a long series of ages. The men, who most diligently occupied themselves in this employment, possessed talents, not inferior to any equal number of those who have succeeded them. Yet their efforts not only failed, but failed in such a degree, that their doctrines, taken in the mass, would not now be regarded with any emotion, but contempt and horror, by a Christian child twelve years old. Their best apprehensions concerning *Virtue*, or moral excellence, were in many respects crude, gross, and false. They placed it, successively, in the love of glory; in the adherence to one, or other, of their systems of philosophy; in courage; and in that love of country, which prompts its inhabitants to hate all others, and to carry into them fire, and sword, and desolation.

Concerning *the Supreme good*; that is, the object, which chiefly deserves to be pursued by man; their apprehensions were equally erroneous. Some supposed it to be glory; others contemplation; others, what they call wisdom; others still, apathy, sloth, and the

pleasures of sense. From their ignorance, and mistakes, concerning these subjects they became absolutely incompetent to devise a system of morality which would bear an examination, or could be adopted either with safety or hope by their fellow-men. As these subjects were every where radical in moral inquiries; errors about them were fundamental; and extended their influence to all their views concerning the duty of man. Hence they enjoined many things as duties, which we perceive to be grossly sinful and abominable; and pronounced many things to be lawful, which we know to be violations of the divine law. What was right, also, they so blended with what was wrong, what was true with what was false, that a separation of the good from the evil became impossible to themselves, and their followers; and much more to mankind at large.

The *Worship*, which they authorized, (for they never attempted to devise a scheme of worship :) was made up of the stupid, frenzied and abominable, rites of their respective countries: a violation, alike, of common sense and common decency.

What was done by these men was, in all probability, the utmost which man is able to do. If *Pythagoras, Thales, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero*, could not form just opinions concerning these subjects; who, in the same circumstances, could? If their opinions concerning them were, to a great extent, gross and contemptible; where are the men, to whom we could apply with confidence for such as were sound, profitable and certain, means of our acceptance with God?

But though the general fact, which I have mentioned, is decisive proof, that men are incapable of devising a system of duty, which man may safely pursue, it is not the only proof of this truth. The very nature of the subject furnishes, if I mistake not, unanswerable evidence of the same truth.

The only manner, in which the human mind is able to determine, satisfactorily, concerning the moral nature of any conduct, without the aid of Revelation, is by its Consequences. That, which upon the whole; or which throughout time and eternity, is profitable to the Universe, is unquestionably right. But who, beside God, can discern what this is? The consequences of every action are endless; and, by them all, this determination is to be

made. The Infinite eye, only, can discover these consequences : the Infinite mind, only, can comprehend them. Man, plainly, can know scarcely one, out of millions, even of those, which will take place in the present world ; and not one of those, which will exist beyond the grave. How absolutely must *he* err, who is precluded from the means of forming a judgment ?

The three great duties of man to his fellow-men are undoubtedly Truth, Justice, and Kindness. The first of these, truth, is a subject absolutely definite ; and scarcely less distinguishable, in any case, than a mathematical quantity. Its importance, also, is pre-eminently great. The consequences of speaking it are more obviously beneficial, and those of speaking falsehood more clearly pernicious, than such as follow any human conduct. Here, then, if any where, we may expect to find the dictates of the human understanding free from perplexity, supported, and decisive. Yet, in every age of the world, men, who have relied on the investigations of Reason for the establishment of a moral creed, have fallen into very serious errors concerning this subject. Nor have these been persons of inferior talents. Archdeacon *Paley*, one of the ablest and most luminous writers of our own time, pursuing this course of inquiry, has determined, that lying is sometimes lawful ; and this, with his Bible before him, and the awful declaration of God himself sounding in his ears ; “ There shall in no wise enter into the heavenly city any one, who loveth, and maketh a lie.” If such is the decision of a Protestant Divine, of great eminence, when thus employed ; what are we to suppose must be the decisions of other men ? If such is the decision concerning Truth ; a subject perfectly simple, obvious, and unembarrassing ; what are we to suppose must be the determinations concerning Justice, and Kindness ; especially the latter ; far less distinctly understood ; far less accurately defined ; and of course exposed to far greater uncertainty ?

With respect to the duties, involved in the general name of Piety, the difficulties are obviously greater. The first of them, and that evidently insuperable, springs from the invincible ignorance of man concerning God.

Most persons, who employ themselves in reasoning concerning this subject, deceive themselves, if I mistake not, and that grossly,

with respect to one particular of very great importance. They seem, very extensively, to suppose that reason, without any assistance, would be able to discover the very same arguments concerning the existence and character of this glorious Being, which, with the Bible in our hands, our own reason possesses. No opinion is more fallacious. From the Bible we learn the existence of one God; and the nature and perfection of his character. From the same source we derive the most just and most comprehensive views of both his works, and designs. In this manner we are placed in a situation entirely new and unattainable by men, destitute of the light of Revelation. It is one thing to know the existence and character of one God, and then to discover the proofs of his existence and character, presented to the mind by his works; and wholly another thing to learn his being and attributes from the works themselves. In the former case, many arguments are discoverable by Reason, of which, left to itself, it would never have entertained a thought. All the arguments, also, which it actually discovers, are seen in a new light; and far more clearly, distinctly, comprehensively, and therefore far more justly, and satisfactorily, than in the latter case. These advantages are incalculable; and ought ever to be remembered with exact discrimination, and to their full extent.

But even now, Revelation apart, it is a task of extreme difficulty to prove the Unity of God; of so much difficulty, that, unless I have been deceived, it has never been performed to the full satisfaction of thinking men. There is also, to this day, when we lay aside the Scriptures, not a little uncertainty, hanging over our views and discussions, concerning the divine Attributes; particularly, those of a moral nature. Still more clouded and obscure are, in this case, the Works of God: while his Designs are almost absolutely veiled in darkness. Could the divines and philosophers, who think most favourably concerning the capacity of Reason to direct our researches into these subjects, place themselves, for a short period, exactly in the circumstances of an enlightened heathen; they would, I suspect, think much less favourably concerning the powers of the human Intellect, than they sometimes seem to have done.

What Reason is really able to accomplish, with respect to this

subject, is in all probability that, and nothing more than that, which it has already accomplished. Its efforts have been made so long, so often, so laboriously, in so many different ages and countries, and by so many minds of the first order, that we cannot, without renouncing our own reason, expect them ever to rise above the height to which they have already attained. What man has done, in this respect, is justly pronounced to be all, which man can do.

But man has in fact lost, invariably, the knowledge of the one perfect God; and, when lost, has never recovered it. Reason has invariably formed many gods: and these, without an exception, have been imperfect in their manner of existence, their attributes, their conduct, and their happiness. They have been impotent, foolish, and vicious.

But the apprehension, that there are more gods than one, changes our whole system of thought concerning the universe; and changes it entirely. Both its worlds, and their inhabitants, have a new origin, and a new destination. They are placed in entirely new relations; subjected to an entirely different set of laws; and are summoned to the performance of an entirely different set of duties. At the same time it becomes impossible, on this plan, for an individual ever to know who, or how many, are the beings, who stand in the relation of gods to himself; or the relations, which he bears, severally, to them. The character, station, office and agency, of each becomes absolutely undiscoverable. It becomes impossible to learn their will, and his own duty. Of course, it is equally impossible for him to know how to please them; when he has, or has not, pleased them; and how to obtain the rewards, which might be expected from doing his duty. Every new god, introduced into the system, renews all the difficulties, attendant upon our inquiries concerning these things, and others connected with them, as they respected him, who was first placed by the mind in this exalted station. The difficulties, therefore, are multiplied, as the number of deities is multiplied; and are mightily increased, also, by the differences of character, stations, powers, and employments, which they are supposed to possess.

Such has actually been the state of *Gentilism* with respect to this all-important subject. Such have been its gods; such the variety,

and uncertainty, of their character, stations, and pleasure ; such the undeterminable nature of the duties, owed to them. Hence the nations, who have embraced this scheme ; and the philosophers as truly, as other men ; have been absolutely unsettled with regard to their own moral actions ; especially those, included under the name of Piety. The consequence has been that, which could not fail of being rationally expected : a deplorable degeneracy of mind, and an absolute corruption of life, with regard to all these duties. It ought here to be observed, that this system has not been improved by philosophers : I mean, upon the whole. That they formed just opinions concerning some subjects must certainly be acknowledged ; but that their whole scheme of moral doctrines, and duties, was at all fitted to make men better than they found them, I see no reason to believe. The system of the *Iroquois* is less absurd, less a vagrant from truth and virtue, than that of the *Greeks* and *Romans*. That of the *Hindoos* is worse than either.

The duties of piety which are most obvious to reason, are Reverence, and Gratitude. In the state of man, which we have been contemplating, both are necessarily attended with very serious difficulties, arising from two sources : the character, and the number, of the deities, admitted into the system.

All our views and emotions toward any being, with whom we are connected, or suppose ourselves to be connected, are necessarily regulated by the character of that being. If he be great, wise, and good ; they are naturally expansive, and elevated : if he be little, foolish, and wicked ; they are of course shrivelled ; at the best listless ; and not unfrequently hostile. But the gods of every polytheist have uniformly sustained the latter character : and this fact furnishes decisive proof, that polytheism can form no other gods. The most exalted of them is infinitely distant from JEHOVAH. *All the gods of the nations are vanity, and a lie* : not false only, but empty, also, of all the proper perfections of God.

The supreme God of every man, whether he be JEHOVAH, *Jupiter*, a calf, or a stock, is the highest object, which that man knows. Above the character of this deity his mind will never rise. Beyond it his views will never expand. His reverence and his gratitude, if directed to JEHOVAH, that is, cordially, will

of course be such, as in some measure to become the character of this infinitely great, and glorious object ; if to *Jupiter*, will sink, as the object of his worship is diminished ; if to a calf, or a stock, will, to say the least, approach the verge of nihility.

The same effect will in a great measure be produced by Uncertainty, in the mind of the worshipper, concerning the character of his deity. Doubtful reverence and gratitude are exercises of the mind, attended with all the burdensome influence of suspense ; and are unsupported, and unawakened, by any settled conviction of their obligatory nature. In this situation they are rendered, at the best, only by fits and starts, and always with reluctance, when rendered at all ; are feeble efforts, when they exist ; and exist only at solitary intervals.

In the minds of men of understanding there will also arise another, and that an immoveable, obstacle to the performance of these duties. This is an absolute uncertainty of being accepted in the performance of any duty whatever. *Socrates* doubted whether God would accept the prayers of men, and advised his pupil to unite with his countrymen in their customary worship, until God should disclose by revelation the worship, which he would accept. This, probably, was one commanding reason to many of the ancient philosophers, by which they were induced to participate in a ritual so unfounded and revolting, as those of their respective countries. The absurdities of this worship, in many of these countries at least, it is impossible, that they should not have perceived : but they knew not what to substitute in its place.

The number of the gods of Polytheism added immeasurably to these difficulties. As the Gentiles knew not who, or what, their gods were ; they could not know what relations they sustained to them ; or what duties they owed ; or in what manner those duties were to be rendered. In the multitude of these deities they found new and still more perplexing embarrassments. The number was uncertain ; and the proper character of each absolutely doubtful. The concern, which each had with human affairs, the pleasure of each, and the services which would be acceptable to him, were all absolutely unknown. Every god, introduced into the system after the first, renewed all the difficulties,

attendant upon the knowledge of the first. Thus the perplexities of the votary were multiplied without end: and what was the gratitude, and what was the reverence, due to each, could never be determined even with a hope of success.

Thus, if I mistake not, it is clearly evident, that *man, without the aid of Revelation, is unable to find out a religion, which will render him acceptable to God; that in this situation he is ignorant of God, and incapable of devising a system of duty, in the performance of which he may hope to be accepted.*

Instead of pursuing the subject through other considerations at the present time, I shall conclude my discourse with three

REMARKS.

1st. *From these observations we cannot, I think, fail to see the absolute necessity of a revelation.*

If the view, given in this discourse concerning the ability of Reason to find out a religion, which will render us acceptable to God, is just; the necessity of a revelation cannot be questioned. If, without Revelation, we are ignorant of the existence and character of God; if we know not, and cannot know, the duties, which we owe to him and to each other; if these things are actually *hidden from the eyes of all living*; then we infinitely need to have these things communicated to us by himself. Without the possession of them we cannot hope for his favour; and without his favour we cannot be happy.

2dly. *From the observations made in this discourse, it is evident, that the objection against the Scriptures, as a revelation from God; that they were published at so late a period; is groundless.*

Infidels have triumphantly alleged this fact against the Divine origin of the Old and New Testament. They gravely inform us, that, if God had thought such a revelation necessary for the purpose of teaching mankind his character, and their duty; he would certainly have communicated it from the beginning. "If," say they, "we need such a communication, in order to enable us to know the will of God; it was equally needed by every preceding generation of men. How unreasonable, then, is the supposition, that this all-wise Being, regarding the whole human

race with equal benevolence, delayed this important blessing till the time of *Moses*; more than two thousand years after the professed date of the creation? What, according to the dictates of this same revelation, are we to suppose became of the unhappy beings, who lived before this date, and were unable to know their duty, because it was not revealed? Are we to attribute such partiality to the infinitely wise and just Ruler of all things? How much more rational then is it to believe, that the religion of nature is the true religion; and that the duties, which it prescribes, are the real and only duties of mankind? This religion was published in the beginning; and has been continued without interruption through all the succeeding generations of our race."

To these specious observations I answer in the First place,
That the religion of Nature is not even yet published.

The first error of Infidels, with respect to this subject, and that a fatal one, is, that what they call the religion of nature may be the means of our acceptance with God. If I mistake not; this has been amply shown in the progress of the present discourse. It has appeared, at least to me, clear, beyond reasonable debate, that mankind in the exercise of their reason have been so far from discovering such a religion, as can become the means of accomplishing this all-important end, that they have wholly failed of discovering either of its great constituent parts. They have neither known *God*, nor his *pleasure*; and of course can neither perform their duty, nor become acceptable to him. Were *Jupiter* the real God; such a religion might, perhaps, secure our safety: but from *Jehovah* it furnishes not a single hope. That the Infinitely perfect Being will bless those who please him, and those only, there cannot be a sober doubt. Equally indubitable is it, that those, whose character comports exactly with this favourite religion of Infidels, can never please him; but must be odious and abominable in his sight. To them, therefore, there cannot be a hope of acceptance.

Secondly, *The revelation of the will of God was begun with the first man; and that, immediately after his creation; and from him was continued in a series of communications down to the date of the Pentateuch.*

Infidels will not themselves deny, that this is declared in the Scriptures : the only source, from which we can derive any knowledge of the subject. No more can they deny, that it was repeated to *Enoch* ; to *Noah and his family* ; to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* ; to *Job and his friends* ; and not improbably to many others. It is certain, therefore, that Revelation was begun at a period, sufficiently early at least, if we receive the testimony, given by itself : and, without this, we know nothing concerning the subject.

Thirdly, *Had mankind been willing to retain, and obey, the will of God ; every generation would have been possessed of this invaluable blessing.*

Had the descendants of *Noah*, in their several generations, cherished this disposition ; nay, had they not been directly hostile to their duty ; Revelation would have descended through every generation of men to the present time.

It may be replied, that this answer reaches only a part of the difficulty ; since preceding generations have actually lost the Revelation, which they possessed ; and therefore their descendants have been born and lived without the knowledge which it conveyed, and which to them is here considered as indispensable.

To this observation I rejoin, that, although its truth is readily admitted, the consequence, intentionally derived from it, will not follow.

The only manner, in which God could satisfy this demand, would be to make a Revelation to every age and tribe of mankind ; and, it would seem, to every family and person. The revelation, made to *Jeroboam*, was forgotten by all his children, except one ; that to *Ahab*, by all his ; and that to *Jehu*, by all his. Those, made to *Jehoshaphat*, were renounced by *Jehoram* ; those to *Hezekiah*, by *Manasseh* ; and those to *Josiah*, by his children. From the whole history of man we have little reason to believe, that, without a constant series of miracles, any revelation, beside a written one, could be preserved. Even a written revelation was sustained among the *Jews* by a series of miracles ; and in this manner was preserved with extreme difficulty. These facts teach us the very manner, in which it must be continued, if continued at all,

among the rest of mankind. But can it be supposed, that God, in order to preserve even the knowledge of his character and pleasure, would convert his whole Providence into a series of miraculous dispensations?

Especially will this supposition appear extraordinary, when we remember, that the beings, for whom all this is demanded, violate every dictate of the divine will which they know; and steadily act in opposition to their own consciences. Certainly such beings must have very imperfect claims, if they can be supposed to have any claims, even to the least blessings; much more to the series of dispensations proposed. All this, however, would not answer the end. Were the revelation proposed actually to be made; there is little reason to believe, that it would be either welcomed or obeyed. Infidels have now abundant and decisive evidence; such, as they cannot answer; and such, as ought therefore to satisfy them, that the Bible is the word of God. Yet they are unsatisfied; and oppose, deny, and calumniate, the Bible. Vast multitudes, also, of mankind, who acknowledge its divine origin, contend against its doctrines, and disobey its precepts. The reason is obvious: they love sin; and dread its punishment: For the very same reason Revelation has been resisted in every age. "This is the condemnation," says the Saviour of men, "that light is come into the world; and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. He, that doth evil, hateth the light; neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd."

3dly. *From the same source we learn, that another objection against the divine origin of the Scriptures, customarily made by Infidels; viz. that they have not been more extensively given to mankind; is vain and futile.*

Infidels customarily speak of natural religion as having been communicated to the whole human race. Yet even themselves, whenever they appeal to facts, are obliged to recur to the ancient philosophers; and those, almost solely of *Greece and Rome*. Exclusively of the discoveries, which are attributed to these men, there is not now, there never has been, Revelation apart, any thing that can be called religion. After mighty and long continued labours on this subject: after many and most magnificent

promises; Infidels have never been able to produce any thing more. Lord *Herbert*, after having made the strongest declarations, that the religion of Nature is innate in the mind of every man, and is there written by the finger of God, is compelled to confess that it has been obliterated from the minds of almost all men. But the philosophers in question were a little company of men; and all, who ever read their books, were but a mere handful. There are more persons in the United States at the present moment, who read the Scriptures, and are in a good degree acquainted with the religion, which they contain, than the whole number, which have read any philosophical writings since Philosophy was first written. There were far more persons in the *Jewish* nation, and in most ages of that nation, who were acquainted with the writings of *Moses*, and afterwards with those of the prophets, than were ever acquainted with the *Grecian* and *Roman* philosophy.

It ought here to be observed, that these writings, also, came into existence at so late a period, that they are liable to the full force of the preceding objection. These Philosophers lived very long after the time of *Moses*; and most of them very little before, and some of them after, the time of Christ. Had they, therefore, discovered a religion, which would render men accepted by their Maker, that religion would have been liable to both these objections, in a far higher degree than the religion of the Scriptures.

But the truth is; the religion, which they taught, was as little fitted to accomplish this great end, as that, which was embraced by the people at large. They cleared the common *Gentilism* of some absurdities, and ornamented it with some doctrines and precepts which were just and defensible. But they added many absurdities of their own; taught false doctrines of their own; and increased the number of immoral precepts. All these, also, they impressed on the mind with the whole force of their genius, learning, eloquence, and authority. In the mean time, their example destroyed the influence of their instructions, when they were true; and increased it, when they were false. What, therefore, they found bad in itself they made worse upon the whole, and not better.

SERMON IV.

ON REVELATION.

MAN CANNOT FIND OUT A RELIGION WHICH WILL RENDER HIM ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. SERMON II.



JOB xxviii. 12, 13.

Where shall Wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?

Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living.

AN intelligent and sober man, surveying himself, and the objects around him, would very naturally form a series of reflections, like the following.

“Whence, and what, am I? How came I to be, to be what, and where, I am? My frame is a complication of wonders, utterly surpassing my comprehension. It is alive. What is that life; and whence derived? It can move. What is the cause of its motions? It is the medium, through which I receive an endless multitude of sensations both pleasurable and painful. By what mysterious power does it become this medium? I can think, and choose: I can imagine, and feel: I can hope, and fear: I can love, and hate: I can enjoy, and suffer. In what manner are these wonderful affections produced?”

“I am placed in a world, full of wonders. The vegetable, the animal, and the mineral, kingdoms are replenished with objects of a marvellous nature; effects, which I can understand very imperfectly; and causes, which I can scarcely understand at all. Yet I can distinctly perceive, that they are extensively fitted for

the use of man; and appear, as if they were intended, to a great extent at least, to contribute to the comfort of myself and my fellow-men. But what are we? For what end were we made? for there are so visible, and numerous, proofs of contrivance, and of such wonderful contrivance, in both the body and the mind of man, that it is irrational, and seems to be impossible, not to conclude, that we were made. Who, and what, is He, by whom we were made? How plainly must his nature transcend all such comprehension, as mine. In the contemplation of such power, wisdom and agency, as I see displayed in myself, and in all things which are presented to my view, I am lost in astonishment. For what purpose was I made? I and all other men must soon go to the grave. Shall I then perish; or shall I survive the tomb, and re-exist in future periods of endless duration? Of what incomprehensible importance are these questions? Who can answer them?"

"If man is destined to be immortal, and may be happy throughout eternity; what measures shall he undertake, to insure this happiness? Where, how, with whom, shall he exist? What will be his circumstances? How shall he act, so as to make all these things desirable, when he shall arrive in the future world?"

Thoughts, like these, have probably passed through the mind of every man, possessed of the character, which I have mentioned. Not improbably, they may often have engrossed his deepest attention; awakened anxiety and alarm; produced perplexity; forced the thoughts to wander into the eternal world; to explore with distressing solicitude the character, and designs, of God; and to ask, "What will become of me, when my soul shall be separated from my body?" "Where," he will irresistibly exclaim, "shall the *Wisdom be found*, which shall make me acceptable to God? *Where is the place of that Understanding*, which will enable me effectually to provide for the wants of my future being? *Man certainly knoweth not the price thereof*; for its value is beyond all price: *neither is it found in the land of the living*; for such a discovery would have filled the world with astonishment and rapture; and the tidings must have vibrated through every nation, and every succeeding age of man."

I have already stated several difficulties, which have prevented mankind from discovering a religion, capable of rendering them acceptable to God. It is now my design to consider this subject with respect to several other things, which may be considered as fundamental; and which, if I mistake not, will, when fairly examined, prove the doctrine beyond all reasonable doubt.

In this examination I shall pursue the scheme, adopted in a former discourse; and shall consider *that, which man can do concerning this all-important subject, as being what man has already done.* It would be idle, here, to enter into abstract speculations concerning the possible extent of the powers of man. After all the laborious efforts, which have been made, and made with every advantage, it is perfect trifling to inquire whether there may not be hereafter some superior mind, or a mind possessed of some superior advantages, by which this mighty discovery may be more successfully made. *Cicero's* remark is, here, plainly conclusive: "That it makes no difference whether no man is wise, or whether no man can be wise."

Still, I propose, for the purpose of producing a greater satisfaction in the minds of my audience, to inquire into *the nature of the case*; and in the course of this inquiry shall attempt to show, that Reason cannot possibly make this discovery, and to exhibit the real grounds of this impossibility.

Towards the accomplishment of this purpose I observe generally,

That our duty cannot be performed, unless it is known;

That it cannot be known, unless our relations to the beings, to whom our duties are owed, be known; and

That these relations cannot be known, unless the nature, character, and circumstances, of these beings, out of which all these relations rise, and on which they all depend, be also known.

These propositions, it is presumed, will be admitted; since they cannot be denied without violence to Reason.

It will be the particular design of this discourse to show, that the several things, which I have specified, are unknown. Should this be evinced; it will follow, that our duty, so far, must be also unknown; and that whatever reward might be acquired from the performance of our duty must be unattainable, unless we can de-

rive the knowledge of it from some other source than the exercise of our reason.

In support of this scheme, I observe,

I. *That Reason, left to itself, cannot understand the Nature of God.*

Simonides, having been asked by *Dionysius*, the tyrant of *Sicily*, what God was, requested a day's time to consider the subject. At the end of this period, instead of returning an answer, he requested two more; at the end of these, four; and at the end of all, answered, that he was unable to tell. Every man, who looks into his own bosom, will distinctly perceive, that, *as face answereth to face in the water*, so does his mind to that of the philosopher. No words will be necessary to convince him of his own ignorance of this great and mysterious Being. If he makes serious efforts to analyze his character; he will find difficulties, substantially the same with those which met the eye of *Simonides*; and will feel that he needs, not a few days, not a few years, not a single life, but many lives, and many centuries, to acquire satisfactory views concerning this unfathomable subject. After all his labours, after all his anxieties, he will find himself compelled to address to his own soul the language of *Zophar* to *Job*, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth; and broader than the sea."

What is thus irresistibly proved by every man in his own serious attempts to investigate the subject is in the most decisive manner, also, evident from facts. Reason has never been able to determine whether there has been one God, or two, or many. The conduct of men in this respect has been very remarkable. Imagination has formed the gods of Reason, or Philosophy. The process appears to have been this. The common people, amid the various displays of the divine Presence and Agency in the natural world, which made strong impressions on their imagination, fastened upon one, and another, as peculiar objects of veneration; connecting with them various traditional doctrines, and stories, in an association, which became ultimately permanent. From reverencing God in these objects they came ultimately,

and speedily, to reverence the objects themselves as gods. From believing, that God was peculiarly manifested in these objects, they soon came to fancy, that each of the objects was a god. When they had once attributed to them this character; the poets, in the wanton indulgence of imagination also, added to their origin and character innumerable suggestions, made by an excursive mind, concerning their employments, their stations, their powers, and their connection with men. In this situation they were taken up by the philosophers. There is no solid ground for believing, that the reason of these men at all lessened the number, or materially improved the character, of the Deities, transmitted to them by the fancy of their predecessors. Of the three hundred *Jupiters*, or supreme gods, of Philosophy, it is originally, and mathematically certain, that all must be false, except one. A glance of the eye proves that one equally false; because fraught with gross and miserable imperfection.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, at the present time, that the debates of Philosophy about the substance of God, his manner of existence, his attributes, and his providence, were endless. Nothing could more clearly prove the difficulties, which, to human beings, attend the subject, than these debates, and the diversity and contrariety of opinion which they unfold. Had the Divine Character been obvious to the Reason of Man; it is impossible, that he should have found the object of his worship in the sun, the moon, the planets, and the stars; in the four elements; in the world at large; in living and dead men; in animals of every description, even down to frogs, and flies; in innumerable creatures of imagination; in a multitude of productions, in the vegetable kingdom; and in images, formed of the various metals, of wood, and of stone.

That it is beyond the power of Reason, unassisted by Revelation, to prove, *that there is but one God*, is certain from the fact, that Reason, thus circumstanced, has never furnished this proof. The volumes of heathen antiquity are absolutely vacant of any satisfactory evidence on this subject. Nor is this all. Not an individual Philosopher, in the whole number, appears steadily to have believed the existence of one God only. *Socrates*, as truly as the rest, speaks, indifferently, of *God* in the singular, and *gods* in the

plural: and both he and they encouraged, and practised, the polytheistic worship. On the one hand they recommended the idolatry of their respective countries; and on the other employed their talents to support it.

We, perhaps, may smile at the views, which they formed concerning this subject; and may easily forget, that for all our superior knowledge we are indebted to the Scriptures. Our smiles may be spared. In their circumstances we should have thought, and acted, in the same manner. Many of the men, who thus taught, and practised, were among the ablest of the human race.

The Scriptures furnish many aids to our reason in examining this subject, of which the ancient Philosophers were necessarily destitute. Of these, Infidels are amply possessed. Yet no Infidel has hitherto produced any satisfactory evidence of the Unity of God. That this would have been done, had it been in their power, cannot be doubted: since their inducements to accomplish it have been more than sufficient.

But the Unity of God, as every one who has read the Scriptures perfectly knows, from the stress which they lay upon it, is a doctrine of supreme importance towards our knowledge of the relations, which exist between us and him. *If there is but one God; our reverence, gratitude, and obedience, are due to him only: if there are two; this tribute is due either equally, or unequally, to both.* It has ever been the conclusion of Reason, that all the beings, to whom this title was justly given, had a claim to the religious services of mankind. Accordingly, those among the heathen, who held that there were two Gods, one good and the other evil, worshipped both; and generally rendered, as do the *Aborigines* of this country, peculiar homage to the evil deity, in order to secure themselves from the sufferings, which they expected him, otherwise, to inflict. What an immeasurable change is thus introduced at once into the religious duty of men, in consequence of their ignorance of the Unity of God, and their admission of a second into their creed. We here see men forsaking JEHOVAH, and rendering their supreme homage to a being, invested with all the attributes of Satan.

Further; if there be two Gods, *what are our relations to each?* By which of them, if it be allowed that we are creatures, were we

created? By which of them are we preserved? From which of them do we derive the means of supporting life, and rendering it desirable? To which of them must we look for the continuance of our being in the future ages of duration? By which of them is this world governed? Are all these things, and others of a similar nature, to be attributed to them both: and, if so, are they equally or unequally attributable? Who can answer these questions?

It is perfectly evident, that the relations; which we sustain to a being, whom we style God, must be essentially dependent on these considerations: and, until the latter can be satisfactorily determined, the former, together with all the duties springing from them, must remain unknown.

Voltaire pronounced *God to be an imperfect and dependent being*. If this is his character; (and that it is the real character of all the gods, acknowledged by both Heathen and Infidel Philosophy, is unquestionable;) it is of incomprehensible moment to us, that we know, so far as it can be known, what is the kind, and what the measure, of the services, whether mental or external, which he will require. That he will require us to think justly of him must undoubtedly be admitted. In order to do this, it is indispensable, that we know on whom, and in what respects, he is dependent; and in what particulars, and to what degree, he is imperfect. If he himself be just; he cannot demand of us, that we ascribe to him attributes, which he does not possess; nor in degrees, in which he does not possess them. Who is able to make these ascriptions truly.

Further. In what manner shall we obtain *the knowledge of his will*; the degree of love, reverence, and confidence, which he requires; the kind of worship, which he expects; or the practical obedience, with which he will be satisfied? Or are all these things to be left to conjecture and accident?

In the Scriptures JEHOVAH is exhibited as *possessing unlimited and absolute perfection*. How different must be the homage and the obedience due to such a being, from those, which can be claimed by one who is dependent and imperfect.

The true God either is, or is not, the Creator, the Preserver, the Benefactor, the Ruler, and the Rewarder, of all beings. The seven-

ral relations, here expressed, are plainly of incomprehensible importance to us. If he is not our Creator; then we are not his property, and in this respect owe him nothing. If he is not our Bénéfactor; he can claim from us no gratitude for any of the blessings, which we enjoy. If he is not our Ruler; we owe him nothing as subjects; are not bound by his laws; and cannot be required to yield him any obedience. If he is not our Rewarder; we have nothing to expect from his hands; and can entertain no hope of his favour, nor fear of his displeasure. But who does not know, that concerning all these subjects the Reason of man has been lost in perplexity and error? Who does not see, that a denial of these attributes to God will entirely change all those relations, which subsist between him and us; and will essentially change, or absolutely annihilate, all the duties which we owe to him?

Many of the Philosophers, and among others *Aristotle*, the ablest of them all, thought, that *the World was not created by God*. If he did not create it; it is not his property; nor the things, which it contains. Of course, he cannot have given it to us. Whence then do we derive, on what foundation do we claim, any property, or any right, in the things, which we possess? Now, in this case, are we indebted to him for our sustenance and comfort?

Is God *the Sanctifier of man*? The ancient Philosophers denied this, almost with a single voice; and the common people at large were of the same opinion. "It is the judgment of all mankind," says *Cotta*, in *Cicero's* treatise concerning the nature of the Gods, "that the gifts of fortune are to be asked of God; but a man is to expect wisdom, only from himself." "Who," says he, "ever gives thanks to the gods for being a good man?" This also has been the general, and probably the universal, opinion of Infidels. Nay, it has been, and is to this day, the opinion of multitudes, who style themselves Christians. Virtue is unquestionably the highest good, which mankind either do or can enjoy. If it is not given to us by God; then we are plainly not indebted to him for that blessing, which is of more value than all others. For the chief part of our blessings then, according to this opinion, we owe him no gratitude. How obvious is it, that the admission, or

rejection, of this doctrine introduces into the moral system a wonderful variation both of our relations and our duties. If virtue is not given by God; we certainly cannot ask for it. Of course, this subject must be excluded from our prayers. If we do not receive it from his hands; it must be equally excluded from our praises. At the same time, how distant from the humility enjoined in the Gospel, must be the self-complacency experienced by the man, who is satisfied that he provides for himself greater blessings than are given to him by God.

Many of the ancient philosophers *denied that there was any such thing as a Providence.* Tacitus declares it to be uncertain, in his view, whether *the affairs of mankind were governed by chance, or fate.* Pliny ridicules the doctrine of providence, as being unworthy of God. Plato taught, that *there is a providence, which extends to individuals, and their concerns;* but supposes, that *the management of things, in this world, is vested in the stars; whom he directs, therefore, to be worshipped.* Generally, the philosophers, who admitted a providence, held either that it was general, and respected only vast and important affairs; or, if it extended to individuals and their interests, that it was administered only by subordinate deities; stars, demons, and other such gods. A great number of them, at the same time, attributed the control of all things to fate: while many others considered them as being left to the direction of chance. Accordingly the elder Pliny observes, that “the goddess Fortune, blind, variable, and inconstant, is invoked in all places, at all times, and by all persons.”

Infidels, in modern times, have adopted opinions, similar to some of these, and exactly the same with others. Mr. Chubb says, “God does not interpose in the affairs of this world at all;” and Lord Bolingbroke, “That God does not determine the existence of particular men, and that there is no foundation for the belief of any particular providence; that God concerns not himself with the affairs of men at all; or, if he does, that he regards only collective bodies of men, and not individuals.”

If these things are true; it is undeniably evident, not that our relations to him, and his to us, are changed, but that all relations between him and us, which are of any importance, are annihilated. If he did not determine our existence; if he does not

provide for our wants ; if he does not preserve our lives ; if he does not defend us from evil ; if, when distressed, he does not restore us to comfort and hope ; then plainly we are indebted to *Him* for none of these blessings ; and they are either casual, or derived from some other being. If they are derived from some other being ; then all our obligations for them respect that being only. If they are casual ; we are under no obligations to any being whatever.

If our actions are too insignificant to be regarded by God ; they ought not to be objects of any concern to us, except as sources of convenience and inconvenience. As right, or wrong, they are visibly of no moment. We are, therefore, released at once from all the duties, which respect God, or our fellow-creatures, or ourselves ; and are under no obligations to reverence, or obey *him* ; to exhibit justice, truth, and kindness, to *them* ; or to restrain within any bounds our own passions and appetites.

Finally, *if God is not in the proper sense the Ruler of the universe ; he certainly has prescribed no law, and required no obedience.* Where there is no law, there is plainly no transgression. What we customarily style sin is, therefore, no more forbidden by him than virtue ; and virtue is no more required than sin. All accountableness is by this scheme exterminated ; all reward ; and all punishment.

II. *Reason cannot discover the Designs of God.*

Should it be admitted, in direct contradiction to the observations, which have been already made, that we are able in some good degree to understand the Character of God ; still it would be impossible for us to discover his Designs. We know, to a considerable extent, the character of many *men* ; and in a variety of cases can form just opinions respecting their future conduct, so far as it will depend on their general character. Still it is absolutely impossible for us to divine at all the various designs, which they continually form, unless when they are pleased directly to disclose them. “ What man,” says *St. Paul*, “ knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man, which is in him ? Even so the things of God knoweth no one, but the Spirit of God.”

The designs of a voluntary being, Omniscience, only, can discern. Accordingly, to *search the heart* is challenged by JEHOVAH

as his own prerogative. The nature of such a being, when well understood, may, I confess, help us to determine what will be the general character of his designs; if he be virtuous, that they also will be virtuous; if he be sinful, that they will be sinful. But it can never teach us what his particular designs will be. Pre-eminently true is this observation concerning God. The nature of God is infinite. All his Attributes are unlimited; as are his views also; his designs; and his actions. His plans are universally formed so, as to embrace all the interests of his vast kingdom, spread through immensity and eternity. What being, beside himself, can understand designs, proceeding from such a source, and comprehending such objects?

Let me persuade you to make the God of the Scriptures, a God whose existence is revealed; whose character is disclosed; whom you may be said in some proper sense to know; whose law is in the most definite manner declared to you; and whose designs, of the highest importance, and in great numbers, are distinctly explained: let me persuade you to make this God the object of your diligent contemplation. Let me urge you to inquire with care whether you know any thing, which is material to his character, beside what is disclosed in the sacred volume. He is there exhibited as self-existent. Can you tell what self-existence is? He is declared to be omnipresent. Can you at all satisfy yourselves how the Being, who is now present in this house, is at this moment also, equally present in the sun, in the fixed-stars, and in the heaven of heavens? He is declared to be omniscient. Can you think what it is to *search the heart*, and the hearts of all beings at the same time; to watch the motions of a minion on his footstool, and the thoughts of an angel before his throne; and at a single glance to survey *whatever is done above, and under the whole heaven*; and to behold whatever is past, present, and future, in the illimitable extent of duration with one view; and that unalterable, and eternal. He is declared to be eternal, and immutable. To him, therefore, there is no succession. Whatever to created beings is past, whatever is future, is to him only present: and *a thousand years are to him exactly as one day, and one day as a thousand years*. All duration to him, therefore, is

expressed by the single word Now. Are not your minds lost in attempting to comprehend these amazing objects?

It is unnecessary to extend this scheme of inquiry any farther. What is true of these subjects is true of all, which pertain to God. What then can be known concerning the designs of such a being as this, beyond what he himself is pleased to reveal? How plain is it, that Philosophy has here no principles, from which to argue; and must form its conclusions without premises.

But in the Designs of God are involved whatever he chooses, and whatever he will do; and therefore all our duty, and all our interest. How then shall Reason find out either?

III. *We know very little of our own Nature.*

The proof of this position is absolute. Philosophers have in all ages been laboriously employed in discussing the human character; and yet no complete, satisfactory account has hitherto been given of this subject. The systems of those, who have gone before, have been regularly doubted and denied, by those who have followed them. Every age, and country, of civilized man, has been extensively employed in this manner. Even now enlightened men are thus employed. Yet where is the treatise concerning man, which has commanded the general suffrage in its favour?

We understand imperfectly the very *Reason*, by which we make discoveries. Concerning the *Will* we are still more in the dark. Nay, we are unsatisfied whether the soul is material, or immaterial. We are still disputing concerning the nature of *Virtue*; and are undetermined whether it is a passion, or the energy of the mind operating in a given manner. We have not yet determined in what *Moral Obligation* consists; or how far it extends: nor are we agreed concerning the nature of *Sin*, or its guilt; or concerning the merit of virtue. The question, whether man is a moral agent or a machine, is still in debate.

On these subjects hang others of immeasurable importance: and, as these are settled, so those must be determined.

Our Relations to God depend on *our own* nature, as well as on *his*. If we are animals, or if we are machines, as philosophers, both ancient and modern, in great numbers have asserted; then

we sustain one set of relations towards God, and toward all other intelligent beings. If we are Moral agents; our relations to both are immeasurably different; and involve an importance, which no finite mind can comprehend: and as these relations vary, so will vary whatever we call by the name of duty. Since, therefore, we are thus ignorant of our own nature; it is clearly evident, that the relations, which we sustain, and the duties which we owe, to other beings must, on this account also, be extensively unknown.

IV. *Human Reason knows, and can at present know, little or nothing concerning other parts of the Divine Kingdom.*

The world, in which we dwell, is connected with other worlds; and its inhabitants, with their inhabitants: In how many ways, for what and how many purposes, how intimately, and how loosely, we are ignorant. Still, it is with perfect reason concluded, that as all worlds, and all intelligent beings, are parts of one kingdom of God, they must necessarily be connected in a greater or less degree. All Intelligent beings are capable of being happy, or miserable; are of a social nature; are fitted to feel, and are intended to feel, an important interest in each other's well-being; and are formed with powers and propensities, which always enable, and at times incline, them to contribute to this glorious object. The Scriptures extensively instruct us in the existence, nature and circumstances, of two other worlds; viz. *heaven* and *hell*. They also announce to us the existence, and unfold some of the interests, of many more; of which they speak, indifferently, under the name of *heavens*, and *heavenly places*. All things in these heavens, as well as in the earth, they assure us, *God will gather together under Christ, as the head*. All these, therefore, are in an important manner interested, according to the Scriptures, in the work of Redemption, and in the person and government of the Redeemer.

It is unnecessary for me to say how nearly we are related to Heaven, and Hell; or how deeply interesting to us is every thing, which pertains to these worlds. That in all probability we shall be more or less concerned, during the progress of eternal ages, in the affairs of all other worlds is with the best reason presumed.

Let it be remembered, that our powers may hereafter be such, as will enable us to visit them with no more difficulty, than we experience in going to the neighbouring towns and villages; and to understand and feel their interests as easily, as we now do those of our own nation. Our Reason also further teaches us, that the disposition, and the intelligence, which may be thus employed, constitute a more exalted and desirable state of being, than any other. Should it be supposed, that this is too much to believe concerning such beings, as ourselves; I answer, that the power and goodness of God are causes, and that Eternity is a duration, amply sufficient to accomplish them all. Let me add, that what the Scriptures teach of the existence of such worlds, Reason readily admits; and the modern Astronomy seems to establish, to say the least, with high probability: I mean with regard to all, except the first two.

Our ignorance of these numerous worlds, and of our relations to their inhabitants, is no more a proof, that we are not thus related, or that our relations to them are not important to us, than the ignorance of a child concerning the various parts of the country of which he is a native, proves, that he bears no relation to his unknown fellow-citizens. The day may arrive to some, or other, of such children; it is continually arriving to many such children; in which they not only become acquainted with these fellow-citizens, before unknown, and many of their interests; but actually exert an important influence in conducting them, in such a manner, as to effectuate extensive and permanent happiness. We, for ought that appears, may hereafter possess a knowledge of distant worlds, resembling this; and may exert a similar influence in promoting the welfare of those, by whom they are inhabited.

This great *Work* of God is one work: and the Scriptures inform us, that *it is perfect*. All the parts are parts of one whole; and are necessary to its perfection. A reason exists for the creation of every atom; and much more for that of every Intelligent being, his attributes, actions, and destiny. To this whole we are so related, according to the scheme of the Scriptures, that we may have a real and useful influence on its well-being: and they have

directly taught us the manner, in which we are to act for this purpose. At the same time they also inform us, that in contributing to it we directly promote our own highest happiness.

That all this is certainly true, and a truth of immeasurable importance, with regard to our escape from hell, and our admission to heaven, if there is a heaven or a hell, there cannot be a doubt. That we should so act here, as to be received into heaven, when we leave this world; that we should so live here, as to live there; be welcomed by the inhabitants to their number, and society; useful to the promotion of their happiness; and be able and disposed to harmonize in their divine employments, so as to become blessings, and not nuisances; every man will readily admit. That all this may be truly applied to other worlds, cannot be questioned.

But Philosophy can direct us to no conduct, which will be useful to this purpose. Yet the purpose itself is probably of more importance than any other; and may, not improbably, involve all that is important to us.

V. *Reason knows nothing concerning our own Future state.*

I readily acknowledge, that Reason can supply arguments, of sufficient weight to render our future existence probable: but this probability is not knowledge. Of the manner of being, of the circumstances, of the residence, of the society which may be found there, Reason is absolutely ignorant. It cannot tell whether we shall be happy or miserable. If we are to be happy; it knows not the kind nor degree of happiness; nor the means, by which it may be secured; nor the duration, through which it will extend.

A single act of ours in the beginning of our present life has often, perhaps usually, a controlling influence over all our earthly destiny. Such an act determines what shall be our education; what our profession in life; what our character, our usefulness, our enjoyments. By a fair analogy, the conduct of the present life may be concluded to have a decisive influence on our whole future state throughout eternity. It is, therefore, of immeasurable importance to us, that we should know how to act in such a manner, here, as to make our eternal existence desirable.

But on this subject Reason can give us no satisfaction. As it

cannot comprehend the nature, nor designs, of God ; it cannot tell what he will demand, or accept. As it understands our own nature very imperfectly ; it is wholly unable to divine what we can do ; what we ought to do ; and the moral nature, desert, and reward, of what we actually do. What a blind, miserable guide is Reason, then, with regard to our future being : and yet in our future being all our important interests lie, except preparing ourselves for it in the present life.

If the observations, made in the present discourse, are admitted to be just ; it will I presume be conceded, that the doctrine in the text is established.

It has been no part of my design to determine, *with precision*, how far Reason is able to proceed in investigating the several subjects, which I have mentioned. To do this, in all the particulars, would demand volumes. The object, which I have wished to compass in this discourse, is to show what is the amount, the sum, of all the possible attainments of Reason, or Philosophy, with respect to the momentous subjects, which have been mentioned. This, if I am not deceived, has been proved to be the following :

That in some of them it is wholly ignorant ; and in all is so imperfectly informed, as to be lost in uncertainty, and forced to rely on conjecture.

This is the state of the whole subject, taken in a single view, which I have wished to press upon your minds.

Infidels, and especially young men who are Infidels, are prone to be satisfied with their situation, and their prospects, without even so much as inquiring whether they have any solid ground for their satisfaction. Nor is this unhappy propensity confined to Infidels only, or to young men. Multitudes, who consider themselves as Christians ; thousands, nay, millions, and a great number of them mature in years, and not a small number exhibiting in other respects sobriety, and good sense ; are accustomed to inquire very little, if at all, concerning the foundation of their hopes of future happiness. Can this conduct consist with common sense ; is it not a strong specimen of delirium ; to hazard the soul on mere uncertainty ? Can it be wisdom, can it be common sense, to launch into the ocean of Eternity upon a plank ?

The only manner, in which Reason can argue, or conclude,

concerning the momentous subject of this discourse, is by *analogy*, founded on experience. But what is the experience, and where is the analogy, which in this case will enable us to argue at all, or to arrive at conclusions on which we can rest with a hope? Can we say, that the self-existent, independent, omnipresent, almighty, all-knowing JEHOVAH is so much like *man, who is a worm, and the son of man, who is but a worm*, that from the character and actions of men we may safely conclude concerning his character and actions; or determine, from what men might be expected to do, what will be done by him? Can we suppose the plans, and the designs, of a being, who *sees from the beginning to the end*, whose plans are formed for the interests of one immense and eternal empire, can resemble the views and purposes of beings, *who are of yesterday?*

We are prone to recline upon *the divine mercy*, very loosely examined, and very imperfectly understood. Look at the events of this world; at the providence, at the actions, of God himself. Certainly it is safer to derive our analogies from *his* actions, than from *our own*. That he should act like himself is rationally believed: that he should act, as we do, is impossible. Look at the ravages of the pestilence, of the famine, the earthquake, and the volcano. Look at the far more terrible ravages of war. All these exist during *our day of trial*. Do they furnish us with a single hope of mercy from the same God in *our day of reward?* Will not he, who does such *terrible things in righteousness* here, prove a *consuming fire* to sinners beyond the grave? Is there not unanswerable reasoning, contained in that text: *IF THESE things are done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*

When we apply our analogical reasoning to the great Universe, and to a future state, is it not equally lame? What is there in this world, which we know to be resembled by any thing in that? What in eternity, similar to that which now exists? Who can tell by the force of his own reason, what will be the conditions of his acceptance, and the proper preparation for happiness in the world unseen? Who can satisfy himself what will be the influence of a single doctrine believed; a disposition fixed; a habit formed; a course of conduct pursued? Every action of ours, of course every principle, and much more every hope, may plainly be con-

nected with an endless chain of consequences. A single volition may make all these consequences widely different from what they otherwise would be. The determination of *Washington* to accept the command of the Revolutionary Army has materially changed the world, not only throughout the present, but throughout all succeeding generations. The cordial determination of a Christian to believe, and obey, will, according to the Scriptures, make an incomprehensible change in him, and his destination, throughout eternity. The change, wrought by a single act, may at first be small: yet it may gradually become greater and greater, until it shall become immeasurable.

But we know not God; we know not ourselves; we know not another state of existence; in any such manner, as to establish one rational expectation of future good. We have no premises, on which we can rest; and can come to no safe conclusions. The soul is here ventured in the dark; and is not able even to grope its way. It knows not whither it is going. If it did; it could not possibly find the path, which leads to the place of its destination. What rational man can possibly be willing to live and die, in such uncertainty, in a case incomprehensibly momentous? Who can be willing to hazard eternity upon the toss of a die? Who, much more deliriously, can venture this immense object upon the casual conclusions of Infidel Philosophy?

SERMON V.

ON REVELATION.

MANKIND IGNORANT OF ANY WORSHIP ACCEPTABLE TO GOD,
AND OF ANY EXPIATION FOR SIN. SERMON III.



Micah, vi. 5—7.

O my people, remember, now, what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings; with calves of a year old?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression; the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

IN this singular passage of Scripture God calls upon the *Israelites* to remember a solemn, and most interesting, consultation of *Balak*, king of *Moab*, directed to *Balaam*, the son of *Beor*, concerning the means of worshipping God in an acceptable manner, and of making an expiation for his sins. The consultation itself is recited in the text; and respects a subject of the highest possible importance to man. It is also given in terms unusually affecting. “Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the most high God?” With what worship shall I appear; what testimonies of reverence, submission and adoration, shall I exhibit; that I may be accepted? “Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings; with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgressions;

the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" In these most pathetic inquiries we cannot but discern an anxiety intense, a distress extreme, about a subject of infinite moment. At the same time we are presented with a total ignorance, on the part of the Inquirer, concerning the proper answer to be given; a state of absolute perplexity; of terrible suspense.

The answer of *Balaam* is not less remarkable. Instead of referring *Balak*, as a modern Infidel would have done, to the light of nature and the decisions of philosophy; he directs him immediately to Revelation. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth JEHOVAH require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

This conversation between *Balak* and *Balaam* seems evidently to have taken place after his attempts to curse *Israel* were finished, and, of course, after he had received the several revelations recorded in the book of *Numbers*. When *Balaam* had come to *Balak*, and attempted to curse the tribes of *Israel*; they were encamped on the plains of *Moab*, by the *Jordan*, near *Jericho*;* but the prophet *Micah* declares, that this consultation was holden from *Shittim*, the place of their last encampment before they crossed the *Jordan*, and began to take possession of *Canaan*, unto *Gilgal*, the first encampment on the other side of the river.† In other words, *it was on the way from Shittim to Gilgal*, that the conversation in the text was holden. It was, therefore, subsequent to these revelations. As the revelations were known to *Balak*, as well as to *Balaam*; the prophet knew that the language, which he here uses, would be perfectly understood by him; since it was exactly equivalent to phraseology which he had often used before: such as "God shall speak," and "The words, which he shall put into my mouth." Nay, he had used the same phraseology with that adopted in the text. "Peradventure the Lord will come to meet me; and whatsoever he sheweth me I will tell thee." This, in his subsequent apology, he explains by the phrase, "All that the Lord speaketh."‡ *For God to shew*, therefore, *Balaam* being his own expositor, is the same as *for God to speak*.

* See *Numbers* xxii. 1, and xxxiii. 43.

† See *Numbers*, xxxiii. 49, and *Joshua*. v. 9.

‡ See *Numbers*, xxiii. 3, and 26.

In a similar manner *Job*, when declaring a revelation from God concerning the nature of Wisdom, Chap. xxviii. 27 and 28, says "Then he did see it, and declare it; yea, he prepared it, and searched it out. And unto man he said, 'The fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom, and to depart from evil is Understanding.'" Without a reasonable question, therefore, *Balaam* declared *these duties of man to have been immediately revealed by his Maker.*

The Revelation, to which *Balak* was here referred, was, not improbably, found in that series of communications, whence *Abimelech, Laban, Pharaoh, Melchisedek, Job, his three friends, and others*, derived the knowledge of their duty, and the means of their salvation. As this prince was the descendant of *Lot*; he could not well be entirely ignorant of the revelations, made to him, nor of those so often made to *Abraham*, while *Lot* was a member of his family.

In the text, thus explained, are clearly taught the following doctrines.

I. *Mankind, without Revelation, know not what worship God will accept, or whether he will accept any.*

II. *They are unacquainted with any means of expiating sin.*

I. *Mankind, without Revelation, know not what worship God will accept, or whether he will accept any.*

All mankind, without Revelation, are precisely in the condition of *Balak*; equally interested; equally ignorant; and, if seriously attentive to their situation, must be equally anxious and alarmed. In support of this proposition, I observe generally, that every sober man must with absolute certainty discern that he is a sinner; that his worship, therefore, must proceed from a sinful heart, and must of course be sinful worship; and by irresistible consequence, that it cannot be accepted by a holy God. This observation no man in the exercise of common sense will deny. Openly, before mankind, he may perhaps contradict it; but in his closet, and to himself, while employed in serious thought, this would be impossible. Men may indeed escape, at least in a great measure, from a conviction of their guilt; and evade the painful consequences which flow from the acknowledgment of it. This may be done by a series of efforts to establish in their minds opinions, which by their influence particularly

sooth the conscience, and lead the understanding away from the subject. It may also be done from mere inattention, when long and habitually continued, and changed gradually into an entire forgetfulness of the subject. But the denial of our sinfulness can never be the direct result of consideration or conviction.

If we are sinners ; it follows irresistibly, that all our moral actions are sinful. Particularly is this true of our worship : a service, in which, if in any thing, purity of character is absolutely demanded. If our worship is sinful ; nothing is more certain than that it cannot be acceptable to God.

The doctrine, thus exhibited by Reason with unanswerable evidence, is in a very forcible and satisfactory manner declared by the Psalmist. " There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared : " and again, " Let Israel hope in the LORD : for with the LORD there is mercy ; and with him there is plenteous redemption. " The former of these declarations may be thus paraphrased. " Thou art a forgiving God, and mayest therefore be feared, or worshipped. If this were not thy character ; worship could never be presented to thee with a possibility of acceptance. " The latter passage may be paraphrased in this manner. " Let Israel hope in the Lord, because he is a merciful God, and has provided for mankind a redemption, amply sufficient for the forgiveness of their sins, and the acceptance of their souls. Otherwise, there could have been no acceptance, and of course no hope. "

But of the forgiveness of God the Gentiles knew, and could know, nothing. Hence it was impossible for them to devise any worship, which he would accept, or of the acceptance of which they could form a rational hope.

Still it must be acknowledged, that the Gentiles did in fact entertain indistinct, obscure and doubtful, hopes of the favour, not indeed of JEHOVAH whom they knew not, but of the gods, whom they worshipped, and who, being themselves morally impure, might not unnaturally be expected to be unsolicitous concerning the absolute purity of their worshippers. With these apprehensions, they performed various religious services, which they hoped would be acceptable to their deities. As these are the amount of all the religious worship, ever devised by mankind : in con-

sidering them we shall examine whatever human Reason has thought proper to adopt, of this nature, for the purpose of obtaining the favour of any deity whatever. I say, "which human Reason has thought proper to adopt," because I entertain not a single doubt, that even these services, instead of being devised by Reason, were either relics, or perversions, of the worship prescribed by ancient Revelation, traditionarily and imperfectly conveyed down to those by whom they were performed. The

1st. *Of these modes of worship was Prayer.*

Prayer, I acknowledge, is an obvious duty of natural religion. As we obtain all things from earthly benefactors by asking; nature itself may be considered as dictating this mode of obtaining favour from God. But what views must a sober Gentile form concerning his own prayers? Were his mind spotless; there could be no rational cause for perplexity, or doubt. But he is a sinner. What, then, must be the use of prayer to him? It certainly cannot be to inform God of what he did not know before. An Omniscient being can want no information, and can receive none.

It cannot be to change either him, or his purposes. The immutability of both forbids every supposition of this nature.

The first and great use of this religious service, without which it can be efficacious to no valuable end, is to change the suppliant, and make him a more proper and worthy recipient of the blessings, for which he prays. But of this change in their proper character the Gentiles could not be conscious. Of real virtue they were not the subjects; and did not know in what it consisted. But it could not be increased in them before it began to exist. To a discerning Gentile, therefore, prayer must seem useless: for of its primary use he must have been totally ignorant.

Equally ignorant must such a Gentile have been of the only remaining motive to prayer: the hope of acceptance, and the consequent attainment of blessings from God. Sinful prayers could furnish no such hopes; and all his prayers were sinful. Commands, promises, and other encouragements to prayer, were to him absolutely unknown. Whence, then, could he derive a rational expectation of receiving any blessings, as an answer to his prayers?

From these observations it is plain, that the Gentiles prayed

from tradition and custom; and not from a conviction of the usefulness of this duty to themselves, nor from any well-grounded hope of obtaining, in this manner, blessings from God. *Socrates* seems to have considered this subject with care; and concluded, that it was impossible to determine whether God would accept any worship from man; or, if he would, what that worship was.

2dly. *Praise was, also, generally offered up to God by the Gentiles.*

The same difficulties incumbered this service, which attended prayer. To be thankful to God for the blessings which we receive from his hands, is certainly a dictate of Natural religion, not less obvious than any other. But how could it be known, or even conjectured, that he would accept this service from a sinner, polluted, as it ever must be, by his impure character? What arguments can even now be devised to prove, that this, or any other, act of worship, rendered in the indulgence of that opposition to the divine character, which is the controlling disposition of a sinful heart, can be acceptable to our Maker?

It is a remarkable fact, that in the prayers and the hymns of the heathen, at least so far as I remember those which I have seen, there are no petitions, nor thanksgivings, for *moral good*. They prayed, and returned thanks, extensively for *natural good*; but very generally at least, if not universally, were silent with respect to moral good. The Grecian Philosophers, as a body, absolutely denied, that for blessings, included under this name, they were indebted to the gods at all.

3dly. *The Gentiles also offered Sacrifices.*

These were embarrassed by all the difficulties which have been mentioned, and by many others. The sacrifice of a victim could be nothing to God; whose are the cattle on a thousand hills: nothing, while living; and certainly nothing, when dead, and consumed by fire, or even by the worshipper. To such gross deities, as those of the Gentiles, they might seem, in the view of such gross minds, to be a gratification. To JEHOVAH this was not possible.

At the same time it was evidently sinful to put a victim to death, unless with a known command, or permission, of the Creator. But neither a command, nor a permission, of this nature could be

known to a Gentile. The institution of sacrifices, revealed to *Adam*, and the renewal of this revelation to *Noah*, together with the permission to eat flesh, were absolutely lost out of the knowledge of the Gentile nations. "Hence they could perceive no right which they had to the life of a victim, either for sacrifice, or food: for, evidently, such a right can be derived only from the pleasure of the Creator.

From the gross apprehension, that sacrifices were of some value to God, arose among the Gentiles the scheme of rendering them more acceptable by increasing the value of the things, which they offered. To this scheme the text strongly alludes. "Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams; or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression; the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Hence were derived the hecatombs of the Gentiles at large; their golden statues; their oblations of gems, rich vestments, incense, and other things, which were peculiarly expensive. Hence the *Carthaginians*, *Mexicans*, and *Peruvians*, offered up hundreds and thousands of human victims; the noblest and brightest of their young men; and even their young children. Hence, in a word, human sacrifices were offered throughout the whole Heathen world. The oblation of inanimate substances was attended with most of the difficulties which have been mentioned above: and that of human victims, while it was accompanied by all these, was also an unnatural and most aggravated sin. Instead, therefore, of rendering the worshipper acceptable to God, they only increased his guilt, and the severity of his condemnation. At the same time they proved, like the anxious inquiries of the text, that those, who presented these oblations, were in their own view sinners against him; and that they were labouring to expiate their sins, to appease his anger, to avert the punishment which they dreaded, and, if possible, to obtain an interest in his favour. Nor did the same things prove in a less decisive manner, that the suppliants, like *Balak*, knew not how to perform this indispensable service, and were labouring absolutely in vain.

4thly. *Another mode of Gentile worship was Ablution.*

Ablutions were practised throughout a great part of the Gentile world; and, as it would seem, with entire confidence in their

purifying efficacy. For this end some waters were occasionally consecrated: while others were pronounced permanently holy. Such were the *Nile*, the *Kristna*, and the *Ganges*. In the nature of these waters sometimes, and sometimes in the manner of using them, it was supposed, there was a power to cleanse the soul from sin. Probably this dreaming supposition grew out of another, equally visionary, found extensively in the ancient philosophy: that sin was an attribute of matter, and not of mind.

We, who know, that sin is seated only in the affections and volitions of the mind, see what they did not, and could not, see; that ablutions, except when they are intended to be mere symbols, are perfectly unmeaning and useless; and only wonder that any of the human race could ever attribute to them any other character.

5thly. *Another act of worship among the Gentiles was Penance.*

Penance is a voluntary affliction of the body, or of the mind, or of both, which was expected to become an atonement for sin. No service, intended to be religious, was ever more useless. Nothing can be of any value, in the moral sense, which does not make the mind better. But no such melioration was even thought of, much less accomplished, by any penance adopted by the Gentiles. Self-righteousness was increased by it often; virtue, never. The devotee became more vain and proud of his religious character; and felt satisfied, not only that he was now safe from the punishment of his former sins, but that at every future period he might in the same manner acquire the same safety.

From these observations it is, I think, clearly evident, that the Gentiles, or, in other words, all mankind who are unpossessed of revelation, are absolutely ignorant of any worship, which can be acceptable to God; and equally ignorant whether he will accept any worship.

II. *Mankind in these circumstances are ignorant of any means of Expiating sin.*

All mankind are sinners. They have broken the law of God, and are condemned by him. *By works of law, therefore, no flesh can be justified in his sight.* Hence it is certain, that if we are ever accepted by our Maker, it must be on the ground of pardon only.

But the law of God knows nothing of pardon. Its only sentence upon transgressors is that of condemnation. This sentence is wrought in the very nature of law; not only in the divine law, but in every other, which has been, or can be, made. Every law speaks only to command, and to compel; and its only means of compulsion are its penalties, denounced against transgressors. Without a penalty, therefore, it would cease to be a law; and would become mere advice. But pardon is a remission of this penalty. Should the law pardon the transgressor, without an atonement; the penalty would be remitted without any cause or consideration. Its sanctions would, of course, be unmeaning threats, never designed to be executed; sounds, without sense; something in appearance, but in reality nothing.

To these observations it may not improbably be answered, that "repentance is a consideration upon which the law of God may with propriety pardon the transgressor." This undoubtedly is the great foundation of hope to all men, who expect to escape punishment, without an expiation of their sins. To those, who indulge this hope, the following considerations may with propriety be addressed.

1st. *The law specifies no such consideration.*

This observation is, I acknowledge, directly applied to those, to whom the law has been communicated. Had God intended to accept those who had violated his law, on the condition of repentance; it is incredible, that this most interesting design should not be mentioned, or remotely hinted, in the law itself. That it is not, every person, who reads his Bible, perfectly knows. On the contrary, the law itself says, "The soul that sinneth, shall die:" and "Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things, written in the law, to do them." If any declarations can forbid every hope of salvation, derived from this source; it is forbidden by these.

2dly. *If the law announced pardon on this ground; it would threaten its punishment, not to transgression, but to impenitence.* Its language would be, "The soul, that sinneth, shall die: but if it repent, it shall live." The punishment, therefore, would rest only on the impenitent: and their impenitence would be the only crime, for which they were punished.

3dly. *That conduct, which the law originally intends to punish, is in its own view that, which itself considers as the crime.*

This, I suppose, will not be denied: for what else does any law punish, beside that, which itself considers as the crime. But in this case the conduct punished is impenitence. This, therefore, is the only thing, which the law, in the case supposed, would consider as the crime. The violations of its precepts would not be considered as crimes, because they were not the things punished.

4thly. *That, which the law itself considers as the crime, is the only thing, which those, who are subject to it, are bound to regard in this manner.*

No subject is bound to consider any thing as criminal in his own conduct, except that, which his lawful sovereign pronounces to be of this nature. But the only things, of which any intelligent beings can repent, are crimes: that is, such conduct, as the penitent himself apprehends to be criminal. In the physical sense it is impossible, that any thing else should be repented of. In the case supposed, therefore, as the violation of the law is not by itself considered as the crime, because it is not punished, and as the subject cannot regard any thing as a crime, but that, which the law has made such; it is physically impossible, that he should repent of this violation. But it can never be a crime not to do that, which is physically impossible. The impenitence of the transgressor, therefore, cannot in this case be criminal.

5thly. *If the repentance is supposed to be perfect; the scheme is vain: for no such repentance was ever found in man.*

6thly. *If the repentance is not to be followed by additional sins; the scheme is vain.*

There never was a repentance in man, unless it was the last moral act of his life, which was not followed by sin. There never was a period in the life of any man, extended through a single hour, in which *he loved God with all the heart, and his neighbour as himself.*

7thly. *Imperfect repentance is sinful in itself; and can never recommend the penitent to the favour of God; nor become a foundation for his exemption from punishment.*

8thly. *If the repentance be followed by sin; the subject of it will*

go to the judgment with sins unrepented of; and will die, possessed, partially at least, of the character of an impenitent.

What hope can such a man rationally form of acceptance with Him, in whose sight the heavens are unclean, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?

The supposition, therefore, that mankind will be accepted on the ground of repentance, is a mere presumption, contradicted by all evidence, and unsupported by any.

In Romans iii. 25, 26, *St. Paul* informs us, that God had set forth Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him, who believed in Jesus. Had Christ, therefore, not been set forth as such a propitiation; God would not have been just, if he had justified mankind. To this declaration Reason, however reluctantly, subjoins her Amen. If the law of God is, like his character, perfect; he cannot possibly consent, that one jot, or one tittle of it should pass away, whatever may be the sacrifice, until all be fulfilled. To permit this law to be violated would be to yield his character, and his government, to the sins of men. But what are men to him? "All nations before him are nothing, and are counted unto him less than nothing, and vanity." He, who made this world with a word, can with a word make millions more; and with the same absolute ease. He, who replenished it with inhabitants, can people those millions with other inhabitants, unspeakably wiser and better than men, by a single command. Were this world therefore, and all which it contains, blotted out of existence; the loss to him would be nothing. But the sacrifice of his law would be a sacrifice of his character, and government: and the loss of these could never be redeemed. It would be a loss, which no mind, but his, could comprehend; and for which the whole universe would be less than the drop of the bucket, and the small dust of the balance. Such a sacrifice cannot, and will not, be made.

That the Gentiles were without any means of expiating their sins, is too evident from what has been said to need any further discussion. All the means, within their reach, have been already mentioned. How inadequate these were, how remote even

from the semblance of an expiation, need not be any further explained.

Infidels have left this subject exactly as they found it. No means of atoning for sin have been devised, or even attempted, by these men. Some of them indeed appear to have expected absolution in consequence of repentance. Beyond this they have devised nothing. Many of them, to avoid, as it would seem, the desperation to which they were reduced by their denial of the Scriptures, have retreated from absurdity to absurdity, with the hope of finding ease and quiet, merely by retiring farther and farther from the truth. Of these some have denied the existence of God; others, his character; and others, his Providence. A multitude have declared, that there is no future state of being; and have thus taken their final refuge in annihilation. "Death an eternal sleep" was not written on the gates of *French* cemeteries, until long after it had been many times reiterated in the books of Infidel Philosophers: and the National Convention of *France* did nothing more than echo back the hollow murmur from the catacombs of Infidelity.

Worship, Infidels have never rendered to their Maker; at least to the eye of man. A feeble attempt to institute a service, so plainly demanded of our race by the character of our Creator, and the relations existing between him and us, was a few years since made in the city of *London*: and a man, recommended to those, who made it, by his notorious apostasy from the Christian religion, and the Christian ministry, was employed to conduct it. A house was hired; and a congregation gathered. For a few weeks they were induced by the novelty of the scene to be present. After this, they gradually fell off: and at the end of three months most of them appeared no more. Two or three families, only, persevered through the year, for which the building had been hired. Thus terminated the only public worship, in which Infidels are known ever to have engaged. How flaming a proof is here furnished, that the professed object of their worship has no place in their affections.

Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who appears to have possessed a more serious cast of mind, and a better character, than any of

those, who have borne this name, has indeed told us, that *the best worship of God is piety, united with virtue*. There can be no doubt, that piety, joined with virtue, or, to use language more explicit, *that evangelical virtue, or supreme love to God, united with disinterested good-will to man*, is the substance and the soul of all that is excellent in rational beings. Beside this, there is no piety, and no virtue. But it is false to say, unless in a figurative sense, that this personal character is worshipping God at all. Worship is always the exercise of the mind; and does not consist in mere qualities, but in the exercise of them. Worship consists in prayer, in praise, and in hearing and embracing, cordially and reverentially, the Word of God; and in the celebration of any other religious ordinances, which he has at any time instituted for the worshippers. It is impossible, that the spirit, and conduct, of quietism should be worship.

There are two insuperable objections against this aphorism of Lord *Herbert*. The first is the absolute indefiniteness of the terms, in which it is expressed. There is, perhaps, no word in the *English* language, which is used in a more indefinite manner than *Virtue*. *Piety*, though a less variable term, is still used in many different senses. It is, therefore, impossible for any person to determine, without a minute definition, what this specious declaration intends.

The other objection is that the author plainly intends to remove out of use all Ordinances of external worship. As man is constituted, and habituated, no internal worship (if this phraseology be permitted,) can exist in the world, without the continual aid of that, which is external. The state of the mind gives, unquestionably, its whole moral character to all external conduct: yet it is itself not only influenced, but absolutely preserved or destroyed, by that which is external. He, who does not worship externally, will soon cease to worship at all. Lord *Herbert*, I presume, intended by this very doctrine to exterminate, as far as might be, all external worship; and, so far as his disciples have been concerned, it must be acknowledged, has been but too successful.

It is however amply sufficient for the design of this discourse to observe, that Infidels have devised nothing with respect to this subject. This maxim of Lord *Herbert*, when reduced to an intel-

ligible and defensible meaning, is taught in the Scriptures with infinitely more force than by him, or any other Infidel writer. All the men of this class, have absolutely failed of adding a single tittle to the Scriptural injunctions on this subject.

With respect to the Expiation of sin, it is hardly necessary to observe, that Infidels do not even make any pretensions to any knowledge concerning it. They appear, with a single voice, to give themselves up to the mere course of events; and either negligently, or resolutely, to encounter whatever dangers and difficulties may attend their own future well-being. Their negligence is stupidity; their resolution, frenzy.

A single remark shall conclude the discourse. It is this.

Infidels, by forsaking the Scriptures, have reduced themselves to a most alarming and deplorable condition.

Infidels are not only sinners, but, usually at least, are pre-eminent sinners. Of this the proof is complete. *To say, that a man is an Infidel, is to say proverbially, that he is destitute of all moral excellence, both in principle and practice.* This phraseology has grown into use, merely from the conduct of Infidels, as observed by the common eye of mankind. In such a case it is incredible, that there should be any error.

What, then, is to become of these men? Like others, they must go to the grave, and to the judgment. That there will be a judgment, and a retribution, after we leave the present world, has been uniformly believed by the great body of the human race, in every age and country, and under the influence of every moral system. A few philosophers, either partially or wholly atheistical, and a very small number of the most ignorant and degraded tribes of *African* savages, have on the one hand denied, and on the other hand been ignorant of, this doctrine. The denial is a gross opposition; the ignorance a gross scandal, to human reason.

What account will these men give of themselves to their Creator? Look into the progress of their lives; and tell me whether they present any thing, which he, in whose sight the heavens are unclean, can be imagined to regard with complacency; any thing, which even the consciences of Infidels themselves can review with comfort?

If there be a final judgment; on that judgment all the future

good of man is suspended. Immortal being, with its amazing interests, will then be to be fixed; and will unquestionably be fixed according to the tenor of the life, spent in the present world. The soul itself will here be finally disposed of; and every thing, which in the view of infidels, as well as of other men, pertains to its welfare? "What is to become of me?" is a question infinitely interesting to every child of *Adam*. Who can answer this question in such a manner, as to remove doubt and anguish, and give peace and hope? None certainly, beside him, who will dispose of us all, in that day, according to his own pleasure. That God will do what he pleases with us, and every thing that is ours, cannot be doubted even by a sot. What this will be, no being, beside himself, can divine. If there is hope for man, for guilty, apostate man; it has never been detected by the human mind. How can it be detected, unless we can fathom the purposes of a voluntary being; and, looking directly into the secret chambers of the soul, see them as they there exist? How obviously is this impossible with respect to a finite being; a man, like ourselves; known to us by a thousand daily communications? How much more evidently is it impossible with respect to God, whose ways are higher than our ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth?

But, although it is impossible for us to discover the allotments of men beyond the grave, it is absolutely certain, that God will regard with favour no beings, but those, with whose conduct he is pleased; and that it is impossible for him to be pleased with sinners. Infidels beyond all doubt are sinners. If they look at all into their minds, or lives, they know themselves to be sinners. They leave the world in the character of sinners. They cannot, therefore, be the objects of his favour, nor receive his blessing: and to this miserable condition they reduce themselves by their hatred and rejection of the Scriptures. Were a Christian voluntarily to place them in this miserable situation, they would pronounce him, and with too much reason, to be a fiend.

SERMON VI.

ON REVELATION.

MODES OF TEACHING THEOLOGY AND MORALS, ADOPTED BY
THE ANCIENT PHILOSOPHERS, INCAPABLE OF PRODUCING
REFORMATION. SERMON IV.



1 COR. iii. 20.

The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

IN the three preceding discourses I have attempted to show, that the reason of man is incapable of devising a religion, which will render him acceptable to God. This general proposition I endeavoured to support by showing, that mankind have never been able to discover satisfactorily a defensible scheme of duty, of worship, or of expiation; that their knowledge of these great subjects is extremely limited; that their arguments are miserably feeble; and that their conclusions, at the best, are totally uncertain. In the last discourse I attempted to prove, that the philosophers, men, to whom all those, who in modern times have asserted the sufficiency of human reason for these purposes, have regularly recurred for the support of their favourite opinions, have, instead of making the religious system, which they found in the world better, actually made it worse.

In the present discourse it is my intention to show, *that the Manner, in which their philosophy was taught, was vain and useless; and could never become the means of accomplishing a reformation among mankind.* To this truth the text immediately conducts us. "The Lord," says *St. Paul*, "knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." This passage is quoted from

the 94th Psalm, and the 11th verse. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity;" that is, "the thoughts of all men, the wisest as well as the weakest." The passage is, therefore quoted with sufficient exactness, without supposing any alteration in the copy.

The word, rendered *thoughts*, in the text, is *διαλογισμους*; the literal English of which is *reasonings*. Correctly expressed, therefore, the declaration of the text will be, "The Lord knoweth the reasonings of the wise, that they are vain." The instructions, which the Philosophers of *Greece* and *Rome*; the *Σοφοι*, here intended by the Apostle, communicated to mankind, were chiefly given in the form of reasonings. Discourses, exhibited in this form, were those, of which they especially boasted, and on which they supremely relied for the dissemination of their opinions, and establishment of their fame.

With the Manner, in which the doctrines of these philosophers were communicated, *I shall unite, in my observations, all the circumstances, of material importance, which attended these philosophical discussions.* The discussions themselves, and the circumstances immediately connected with them, were so intimately interwoven, that they came to the minds of all, who received them, as one combined object; and were inseparably united as a single cause of whatever effects they produced on the mind.

With these observations premised, I assert from the text the following Doctrine:

That the Mode of teaching Theology and Morals, adopted by the ancient Philosophers, involv'd in itself a necessary, and total, inefficacy for producing a reformation among mankind.

Moral and Religious instructions, whether Doctrines or precepts, are capable of being taught in two great, and entirely distinct, methods; viz. as *Laws, and Philosophy*. Whenever they are communicated in the form of laws, *binding the consciences and the conduct, of men*; it is obvious, that they can be communicated, with either propriety, or effect, *only by a lawgiver, who has a right to prescribe*, as well as to teach. This lawgiver can be no other than God: and the mode of teaching cannot be adopted in any code of instruction, except a Revelation. This truth has been every where felt, and acknowledged. Accordingly, all instructors.

vested, or professing to be vested, with authority merely human, have taught in the latter of these methods; or that of Philosophy; sufficient, perhaps, to influence with all the necessary advantage the ordinary and prudential pursuits of mankind; but absolutely vain, as may appear from the following considerations, in those concerns, which involve our duty, and salvation.

I. *Philosophy teaches its doctrines, universally, as parts of a system.*

This method seems to be involved in the very nature of philosophical teaching. As that, which is to be taught, is rarely evident by itself; it must of course be supported by evidence, derived from other sources. The evidence, by which any doctrine is supported in the mode of philosophical instruction, is usually dependent for its strength, in a great measure at least, on the connection of that doctrine with others. In order to evince the truth of the respective parts, their connection must almost always be exhibited; so that they may seem to be parts of one whole, and necessary to each other. Hence the whole, of which the supposed doctrines are parts, must be displayed. In other words, a scheme, or system, of the science to which these doctrines belong, must be formed by the teacher, and unfolded to his disciples. So generally, and so much of course, is this the fact, that a work, formed in such a manner, is appropriately called a *philosophical work*. If the course, here specified, be not pursued; a great part of the evidence, which supports the individual doctrines, must be lost. Most of them will of consequence be unsupported; and will, therefore, be taught in vain. In this manner of teaching, (the best, I acknowledge, which mankind are able to adopt.) there are two very important defects; so far at least, as it has hitherto existed.

In the first place, *The system will, almost of course, be too complex to be thoroughly understood, and comprehended, by the teacher himself.* Some of the parts he may understand, and unfold, clearly. Of others he will form such inadequate conceptions; and will convey such indistinct views of them in his instructions, as will be utterly unsatisfactory to his most ingenious and learned readers. The human faculties are unequal to the exact comprehension of any very complicated scheme of truth. In such

a scheme there will always be some avenues to mistake ; some things not clearly seen, and others absolutely unseen. Ignorance and misapprehension concerning these will obscure, and perplex, the rest ; and diffuse a general uncertainty over the whole. Hence professed philosophers will not accord with each other ; as we know they never have done ; nor unite in any single scheme of doctrine.

But in subjects of such amazing importance, as those which are involved in a system of religion, doubt is always distressing, and not unfrequently fatal. Satisfaction is here felt by the soul to be indispensable : and, when it cannot be found, man is ever prone either to lie down in sloth and indifference ; or to become sceptical ; or to yield himself up as a victim to despair. Each of these courses is ruinous ; and all naturally spring out of the moral systems of philosophy.

Secondly. *The great body of mankind are unable to think systematically at all : that is, in such a manner, as to perceive the evidence, arising from the connection of the parts, and from their combination in a whole.* Unlearned and ignorant men think chiefly in single and detached propositions ; not in connected chains and schemes of thought. Many men form scarcely any general propositions ; and are by immoveable habits confined entirely to particulars. But systems are composed only of general propositions. How can they be received by such men ; men, who can scarcely understand even a little part of them, and cannot perceive the nature of that connection between the parts, on which all in a great measure depend for the evidence of their truth, or probability ? To the great body of mankind even the plainest and simplest system must be either entirely or chiefly useless ; because they can never comprehend it ; and because it must, therefore, be regarded with doubt by such minds as theirs. But in a case of such magnitude ; a case, where the present and future welfare of the soul is at hazard ; doubtful precepts and doctrines can have no efficacious or salutary influence. No precept, which is not believed, will be obeyed. For this, as one reason, the instructions of philosophy never governed the common people at all. The traditionary doctrines and precepts of their ancestors, unattended with any other evidence,

than the authority of long continued custom, controlled the worship and the moral conduct of each successive generation : while the dogmas of philosophers were treated only with listlessness, or contempt.

This is an inherent and inseparable defect in philosophical teaching ; and will always exist, so long as philosophers themselves are so imperfect ; and so long as the great body of mankind are labourers, and not philosophers. Even those instructions which are true, and those precepts which are just, will have, and ever have had, little or no influence on mankind, when taught in this manner only. Neither the books of the ancient philosophers, nor those of modern Infidels, have had any other influence on the common people, beside encouraging them to a greater degree of licentiousness, than they would otherwise have dared to indulge.

2. *Philosophers have never been able to determine what moral and religious truths were Fundamental.*

By fundamental truths I mean *such, as are absolutely necessary to be obeyed ; or, in other words, such, as, being obeyed, are followed by the divine acceptance ; and such, as, being disobeyed, are followed of course by our condemnation.*

To understand all moral truths is evidently beyond the power of man. The utmost, which we can do in the most favourable circumstances, or with the aid of Revelation itself, is to fasten upon certain primary ones ; a few ; of all possible importance ; and adhere to them, as being sufficient to insure our salvation. This, peculiarly, is all, that can be done by the great body of mankind. The great body of mankind must either labour, or perish. They have but little time to think, or to compare ; and without thinking, or comparing, they certainly cannot form conclusions of any value. To men, thus situated, it is therefore absolutely necessary, that they should be furnished with such truths, as are fundamental and sufficient ; and that they should be assured what these are, beyond every reasonable doubt. But this is a work, which philosophy has never accomplished, and is plainly unable to accomplish. As a source of moral instruction, therefore, it is fatally defective.

It is remarkable, that philosophers could never agree on the two greatest, and most important, of all moral subjects, *the character of God, and the supreme good of man.* The diversity of

their opinions concerning them was wonderful : and the more they inquired and discoursed, the more numerous, distant and discordant, their instructions became. What, then, must have been the situation of their disciples? How perfectly must they have been at a loss concerning their whole duty, and their whole interest? At such a loss they actually were. Perplexed ; despairing altogether of arriving at truth ; they followed their traditions, and left the philosopher to himself : deciding, as God has decided in the text, that *the reasonings of the Wise are vain*.

3. *Philosophy was never able to determine whether all the things, necessary to salvation, were known by itself, or not.*

Had Reason been able to discover, that certain truths were fundamental, it could have never determined *whether there were not other truths, of the same indispensable importance, and necessity, which were still hidden from its view*. This also was a fatal defect. It is not enough to know what is indispensable to our salvation ; unless we also know, that we possess all the truths, which are of this absolute importance. The ignorance of one such doctrine must of course be fatal to us. I speak not here of ignorance which is necessary and unavoidable ; but of that which is voluntary ; which flows from sloth, indifference, and neglect, from the love of error, and the hatred of truth. In such ignorance philosophy left all its votaries, and all its disciples, and in the doubt, fear, anxiety, and despair, to which such ignorance conducts every serious man ; or in the apathy and licentiousness, to which it prompts the thoughtless and the sensual.

4. *Philosophers have differed endlessly, and must of course differ from each other.*

Their systems have been widely diverse in almost all respects, and about almost all things. They have dissented unceasingly concerning God and religion, concerning human duty and human interests, concerning virtue and vice, concerning the divine government and moral obligation, concerning the nature of the soul, and the character and destination of man. They have contended alike about fundamental and circumstantial doctrines ; about expiation and acceptance ; about worship and forgiveness. Nor have Infidels been in any material degree more harmonious than their predecessors. That this discordance is a thing of course, is prov-

ed, beyond debate, by its actual existence in all ages and nations, in all the sects of philosophy, and among the individuals of each sect. This fact unanswerably evinces, that its foundation is laid in the nature of the case, and that it is inseparable from the character and circumstances of the men. None of them confided in the doctrines of others; although each pertinaciously adhered to his own. Against each his rivals argued, and pointed the shafts of contempt and ridicule. The people at large, when they gave them any attention, disbelieved sometimes one, sometimes another, and generally all. That such must be the case might easily have been foreseen: for it was impossible, that they should know who was in the right, and who was in the wrong; or whether any were right, or all were wrong. Thus they accomplished, and plainly could accomplish, nothing.

5. *Philosophy is necessarily defective in Evidence.*

The evidence of doctrines, taught philosophically, is argument, exhibited in a course of reasoning. In the case, under consideration, such evidence is necessarily defective. In a multitude of instances it is imperfectly discernible even by the philosopher himself. In subjects so extensive, complicated, and abstruse, as those involved in a moral system, it is impossible for the human mind to comprehend with distinctness and satisfaction to itself, even a moderate part of that which it is highly important to know. Hence the philosopher himself is very frequently at a loss, unsatisfied, and wavering. The best arguments, which he possesses, he will undoubtedly communicate to others; not because they are sound, and satisfactory even to himself; but because they are the best, which he is able to devise. But these arguments, even when they appear to him clear, and convincing, will, when presented to other minds, have less force, than was attributed to them by his own. He, in many instances, will doubt their solidity: they will deny it.

As many even of those, which he esteems his best proofs, will appear to others feeble, and futile; so this fact will lessen the force of all. When the teacher so often halts; those, who are taught, will almost of course believe, that he is universally lame; and will attach to him little or no credit.

In support of these observations, I refer such, as think it neces-

sary, to the doctrines of *Plato*, and *Cicero*, concerning subjects of religion ; and to the arguments, with which these distinguished men have laboured to sustain them. How few of those doctrines will now bear an examination ; and how few of the arguments, by which they are supported ? It is ever to be remembered, that the *Gentiles* had no doctrines, but such as theirs, and such as were worse than theirs ; and no evidence to prove their truth, or probability, but these very arguments, and others less clear, and less conclusive.

At the same time, the people at large can never understand, to any great extent, this kind of proof. It requires no small degree of intelligence to discern clearly and satisfactorily, the reasonings contained in a philosophical book. Learned men are often puzzled ; unlearned men know little, or nothing, of the subject ; and at once lay it aside in despair.

Let this case be illustrated by a plain example. How few of our own uneducated countrymen would be able to comprehend the system of thought, and the arguments by which it is supported, contained in *Mr. Locke's Essay on the Understanding ; or Paley's Moral Philosophy ; or Bishop Butler's Analogy ; or President Edwards' Treatise on the Freedom of the Will*. Yet each of these books is written with far more clearness and conclusiveness, than those of any ancient philosopher : and the common people of this country are incomparably more enlightened than those of *Greece* and *Rome*. Plainly, then, the writings of the ancient philosophers must have been of little or no use to the great body of their countrymen.

6. *The philosophers taught Contradictory doctrines with the same confidence, earnestness, and evidence.* This was done, to a great extent, by the same individual ; and still more by different individuals of the same sect. Most of all, the different sects, while they contradicted each other endlessly, asserted their respective dogmas in the same strenuous and decisive manner ; and supported them with reasonings which they professedly considered as being conclusive. Of these a considerable number were ingenious men ; and some, persons of great talents. The whole force of their ingenuity, and their reputation, was in each case added to their respective dogmas. The writer was here posted against

himself. Individuals were arrayed against other individuals ; and sects were embodied against other sects. The number, skill, and prowess, of the combatants were to the eye of a spectator equal. All claimed the victory : and it was impossible for any one, who surveyed the conflict, to determine where the victory lay. Accordingly one class, or one individual, had, at one time, the greatest number of adherents, or at least of admirers ; and another, at another. What sober man could be willing to rest his soul, and his salvation, on such instruction as this ?

But the evil extended much farther than the account, which I have here given. All these men taught truth and falsehood, sober sense and contemptible absurdity, virtue and vice, in the same system ; in the same treatise, and not unfrequently on the same page. All these, also, were supported with the same ingenuity, with the same confidence, and with arguments possessing, apparently, the same force. What then was to be done by those, whom they taught ? Was the whole to be swallowed ? How loathsome, as well as how noxious, must be the dose ? Was the whole to be rejected ? Of what value, then, were the instructions ? Was the truth to be separated by the reader from the falsehood, and the right from the wrong ? This was beyond his power.

7. *Philosophers were totally destitute of Authority.*

Wherever Evidence is wanting, and instructions and precepts are yet to be given ; its place must be supplied by Authority. In other words, the teacher must be known, or at least believed, to be so wise, so skilled in the things which are taught, as to be obeyed on account of his character. In this respect, Philosophy has ever been totally defective. No philosopher ever possessed such a character, as to place him clearly above those, by whom he was contradicted and decried. No philosopher ever possessed the character, which I have mentioned above ; and which is plainly indispensable for this great purpose. Many of them were generally acknowledged to be ingenious ; and some of them to be learned ; but not one of them was regarded as being sufficiently intelligent, sincere, and wise, to be believed and obeyed on the ground of his personal reputation. Not one of them, therefore, had any decisive influence. *Socrates* is acknowledged to have been the wisest and best of the *Greek* Philosophers. Yet *Socrates*

had no material influence over the *Athenians*. On the contrary, they evidently regarded him as a mere projector of reformation; unauthorized; an enemy to the established religion; a proper object of public odium; and justly meriting death from the government of his country.

Nor is the authority of Infidels, at the present time, on a higher scale. *Mr. Hume* has undoubtedly obtained as much reputation, as any man of this class: and greater efforts have been made to give him a distinguished place on the roll of fame, than have ever been made in behalf of any of his associates. Yet in his integrity, probably, no sober man confides. Of his wisdom no such man is satisfied: and his skill in moral subjects appears to have been little else than an ability ingeniously to perplex them. Among all those, who have praised his ingenuity, I do not remember an individual, who has even remotely expressed the least confidence in his character, as a teacher of morals. Indeed, no man, who reads his *Essay on Miracles*, or almost any other of his favourite performances, with impartiality and care, can believe him to have possessed such a degree of integrity, as is indispensable to this important character.

But there is another kind of authority, of a far higher nature, and absolutely necessary to command the belief of mankind, and their obedience to a moral system. *This is a known right to utter precepts, and to require obedience.* Such a right cannot reside in man; nor in any being, but God, and those, whom he commissions with his own authority. It is unnecessary to observe, that Philosophers never had any such commission; nor could make a single pretence to any such authority. Of course, whatever they uttered was *mere advice, and not precept*. No man felt himself bound to obey. He might admire: he might not dispute: but to yield obedience he could feel himself under no possible obligation. Whatever might be pleaded in favour of the system, or any instructions which it contained; it would regularly be opposed by this reasoning, which could never be answered. "If God required us to believe and obey the things, which this man has taught; why has he not made known his pleasure by some certain, or at least by some probable, indication? It may be

true: but, if it were necessary in the sight of God, that we should obey it, he certainly would have discovered to us this necessity."

Many of the distinguished heathen clearly perceived both this defect, and its importance. Hence they endeavoured to supply it by various measures, which they thought favourable to this end. Hence some of them, as *Manco Capac*, and his sister, *Mama Oella*, claimed to be children of the gods; that a degree of divine authority might be supposed to have descended to them. *Lycurgus* professed to have received his instructions, his laws, and the government of Sparta, from the Oracle at Delphi. *Numa* professedly derived his from the nymph *Egeria*: and *Zamolxis* professed, that he had been raised from the dead. Others, by degrees, claimed, and obtained, divine honours; and had temples erected to them, and sacrifices offered. In all these, and other similar modes, have men testified their consciousness, that the authority of God was necessary to give efficacy to whatever they taught or enjoined.

Even human authority, shadowy as it is, the philosophers could not boast; because whatever they possessed was contradicted by other human authority, equally great and good with their own; and because they were not rulers, and had therefore no right either to make, or to execute, laws.

From these considerations it is evidently impossible, that philosophy should possess any sanction to its precepts. Philosophy, being absolutely destitute of authority, could promulge no law, prescribe no duty, forbid no transgression, promise no reward, and threaten no penalty. This absolute imbecility, inherent in its very nature, was distinctly discerned by those to whom its instructions were given. Accordingly these were embraced or rejected, as mere matters of entertainment and pleasure; not as rules, obligatory upon the conscience and the life. Hence it had not the least power to amend the heart, or reform the conduct. The whole history of the heathen world furnishes not a single reason to believe, that its instructions ever reformed one individual, either among the teachers, or among their disciples.

3. *To complete the defectiveness of this method of teaching, the Language, which it has always employed, is incapable of being understood by the great body of mankind.*

Every science always has its peculiar phraseology; usually called *technical language*: and every person, acquainted with the subject, knows, that the peculiar ideas, belonging to each, cannot well be expressed in any other language. Of this the observations of *M. Locke* on civil and philosophical language may be regarded as ample proof. It is, however, sufficient for my own purpose, that such phraseology has been always adopted by philosophers. Were they, then, to be the only teachers of mankind; Religion would, of course, be communicated in this phraseology: i. e. a considerable part of the terms, used, would be technical: and, unless these were understood, the discourses, in which they were found, must be sealed books to the great mass of readers. Such always has been the fact. Deliver any book, of this nature, to a man, that is not learned, saying, “*Read this, I pray thee:*” and he will say, what native good sense, and the necessity of the case, compels him to say, “*I cannot; for I am not learned.*” Put into the hands of such a man *Paley’s Moral Philosophy*, written with great perspicuity, and precision, and with a studious avoidance of this phraseology; and it will be chiefly lost to him. Sermons, written in this manner, are proverbially censured, as being by the preacher voluntarily made useless to his audience.

But what effect can be produced on the mind of a reader by instructions, delivered in language, which he cannot understand?

From the observations, which have been made upon this passage of Scripture, I derive the following

REMARK.

How totally superior is the manner of instruction, adopted in the Scriptures, to that, which is found in books of philosophy?

The instructions, and precepts, contained in the Bible, are communicated to us as the instructions of that Being, who alone understands the real system of moral truth.

As God perfectly knows every thing, pertaining to this subject; he is perfectly qualified to prescribe every rule of human faith and practice. As he knows all his own determinations; he is perfectly prepared to declare the manner, in which he will regard every thought and action of man; and, therefore, the manner, in

which each will be rewarded or punished by him in the future periods of our being.

In the Bible, also, *these instructions are exhibited as being given by Him, who can prevent, or accomplish, whatever he pleases.* Of course, whatever he declares will be found true. Every threatening will be executed; and every promise fulfilled: and both, in the very manner announced. Whatever God designs will exist in its proper time, and place. Whatever he declares, or requires, will, therefore, harmonize with every thing which has taken place, or is to take place hereafter; with all that exists in this world, and in every other world; with the events of time, and with those of eternity. No event will be unexpected; no design disappointed; and no declaration fail of a complete accomplishment.

At the same time, *these instructions are given in the best Manner.* The language of the Scriptures is the plain language of common sense; the customary language of man; the language, which God formed him to speak and to understand. In this language the doctrines, precepts and ordinances, are delivered in short and simple rules, and obvious declarations; easily comprehended, easily remembered, and easily applied. By themselves they are far more evident, than the parts of a philosophical system ever were by the aid of any arguments, which its authors were able to produce.

The Law of God, contained in the two great commands, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself;" though so short, as easily to be written within the compass of a shilling, contains more sound wisdom and involves more rectitude, than all the volumes of philosophy, which have been written since the world began.

Scarcely less remarkable is it, or less deserving of our attention, that *the Scriptural system is in a great measure constituted of Facts.* The great works of creation, and providence; peculiarly the wonderful work of redemption; the resurrection; the conflagration; the final judgment; the formation of new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell forever; are themselves, when reduced to the form of declarations, the primary doctrines of the Scriptures. How much is contained in this declaration of a single fact: "For, while we were without strength, Christ

in due time died for the ungodly ;” and in this ; “ Of his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

Facts seem never to have had their proper place given to them in the apprehensions of the great body of philosophers. An observer of human nature will easily discern, that they are far more convincing, as well as far more impressive, than any other kind of evidence, which is applicable to moral subjects. This is not only true with respect to plain men, but with respect to all men. No abstract consideration concerning the Divine character has ever had, or can have, the same influence upon mankind, as the facts ; *that God is the Creator, Preserver, Ruler, and Judge of the universe.* The proof of this is in every man’s bosom. But philosophy knew not these facts, nor any of them. It conjectured indeed, and then doubted ; and then conjectured again : and this was all, which it was able to do.

The Scriptural system is also Supported by facts : the best of all evidence : that, which men can most clearly see ; most successfully apply ; and most powerfully feel : and, indeed, the only evidence, which is felt at all.

All this, however, is remote from the whole truth. *The Scriptural system is a Law.* Its instructions are obligatory rules of faith ; its ordinances, of worship ; and its precepts, of moral practice. This consideration gives it a weight, infinitely different from that of philosophy. Intelligent beings, and men especially, are not, and cannot be, controlled by mere advice. Of this the acknowledged necessity of human governments furnishes the amplest proof ; and has furnished it in every age, and in every country.

In the character of a law, *it is promulgated by the proper Law-giver* : the only being, who has a right to prescribe, or is able to prescribe, rules of faith and practice, to his Intelligent creatures. All the attributes necessary as qualifications for this exalted, and, permit me to say, stupendous, employment of directing the consciences and the moral conduct of rational beings, are inherent in JEHOVAH. He, and he only, possesses the knowledge to discern what in all cases is true and right ; the disposition in all cases to require it ; the power to demand it ; and the skill, ability, and in-

clination, to reward it. At the same time, the beings, to whom he prescribes, are his property ; made, preserved, and blessed, by him. Hence to judge and retribute their actions is his proper and undeniable province. Conjoined to all these things, he possesses an exaltation, greatness, and glory, which ensure the awe of the bad, and the reverence of the good, throughout his immense kingdom. What other being can claim even one of these attributes ; or, without them all, can assume, but with equal arrogance and injustice, the prerogative of controlling the conscience, or prescribing rules for the moral practice of mankind.

At the same time, *this law is furnished with all the Sanctions, necessary to enforce its requisitions, so far as they can be enforced upon such beings, as men.* To obedience is promised the favour of God in this life, together with all the blessings, which can be expected to flow from it in our present state ; blessings, to be followed by immortal life in the world to come. To disobedience is threatened the anger of God in this world, and endless perdition beyond the grave. These are sanctions, of the highest possible import : such, as none but God has a right to establish : such, as none but God can execute. That he will execute them his unchangeable truth furnishes the most decisive and awful evidence. If, then, prescriptions, requiring of us virtuous, and forbidding sinful, conduct, will ever be obeyed ; these, certainly, will ensure our obedience.

To prevent us from being at a loss, and of course perplexed, and distressed, *the Scriptures, have distinguished those truths, which are Fundamental, from those, which are of inferiour importance.* The suspense, therefore, in which Philosophy leaves the mind concerning this all interesting subject, is here taken away. The promises of acceptance, and the threatenings of rejection, are here specifically made : and every man knows, or may easily know, what that obedience is, and what that character, which will certainly secure his salvation.

Even this is not all. Nor is the most interesting part of the whole subject hitherto brought into consideration. *To sinners the all important concern is to obtain an Expiation for their sins.* Of such an expiation Philosophers have never dreamed. This is a part of divine *Wisdom, absolutely hidden from the eyes of all liv-*

ing. But in the Scriptures such an expiation is provided, established, and in the clearest terms announced to mankind. It is an expiation, concerning the sufficiency of which to cover the sins of the chief of sinners, and to ensure his acceptance with God, not a reasonable doubt can be entertained. It is an expiation, devised by God himself; and, therefore, certainly such, as he will accept. In consequence of it, *he exhibits himself as seated upon a throne of grace, or forgiving love; and proclaims boldness of access to all returning sinners for the supplication of his mercy, and the attainment of the justification of life.* Without this mighty constituent, the best religious system would be lame in its provisions for the salvation of sinners; and inefficacious, so far as they were concerned, to the production of any real good.

In addition to all these things, *the Scriptures announce to us, what none, but God, could announce, or imagine: that, to counteract the hardness of our hearts, and the obstinacy of our sinful habits, He has sent his Holy Spirit into the world, a divine and almighty Agent, to form the heart of man anew; to remove his rebellious disposition, and to implant in him a spirit of allegiance, and duty.* This is another requisite, without which no religious system can be of any avail to the virtue or well-being of man.

Here, also, *truth and falsehood, virtue and sin, are separated by lines of distinction, so broad and so clear, as not to be unobserved or mistaken, unless from choice.* Systems of philosophy have been endlessly various and contradictory. The errors of the same philosopher are perpetually blended with whatever truths he communicates; the precepts which enjoin virtue, with those which sanction vice. All these, also, are attended with exactly the same authority, and with substantially the same arguments. One philosophical system, also, possesses exactly the same authority, and substantially the same evidence, as another: that, which contradicts, as that which is contradicted. What plain man, nay what man of learning, can here distinguish truth from falsehood; moral precepts from immoral; virtue from sin.

Infinitely distant from all this, *the scheme of the Bible is but one.* One living and true God is the foundation of it; laid by every writer, and on every page. Obedience to him is a single,

indivisible thing: the *love, which is the fulfilling of the law*. The atonement is one. The character, to which the blessings of it are given, is one. The salvation, promised, is one. Amid the endless varieties of instruction, precept, and promise; of admonition, reproof, and threatening; contained in the Scriptures, a single scheme runs through the whole volume; and is adopted with absolute exactness by every writer. Hence *the way of holiness becomes a highway: and wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein*.

Finally, *the Scriptures contain Examples of real Virtue*; which in the happiest manner elucidate and enforce the nature and the importance of obedience to God. They elucidate these things by showing, that virtue has in fact existed in this sinful world. Such is the exhibition given of them, that no person, who reads it, can doubt for a moment that the examples, which are presented to our view, were possessed of real piety, or that they were genuine children of God. That this was the character of *Abraham and Moses, of Paul and John*, can be doubted by him only, who is resolved to doubt concerning every moral subject. This fact, let it be remembered, is of high moment to such beings as we are. With all her boasts, philosophy had no such example to give; and was, at the best, compelled to leave unanswered the great question; *Whether virtue ever existed in the present world*.

By these examples, also, are we taught the Manner, in which Virtue operates in human minds, and in the progress of human life: the duties which it performs, the sins which it shuns, and the manner in which it believes, repents, and obeys. The value of this instruction cannot easily be estimated. Whatever is done is far more clearly understood, more deeply felt, and either more faithfully followed, or more cautiously shunned, than that which is barely taught.

In all this the importance of a virtuous character is evident. Still more gloriously is it manifested in the *Rewards, to which we see those, who possess this happy disposition, regularly conducted*. These rewards are immortal, and divine; transcending every thought and every wish, which can be formed by a created mind.

Among these examples there is one, like to which nothing ever existed in the present world, and nothing was ever formed by the power of human Imagination. *This is the example of CHRIST.* Search all the books, beside the Scriptures, which have been written since the world began: and one of those little histories, which record this example, will be acknowledged by you, if you are an honest man, to exhibit more clearly, and comprehensively, the nature and excellence of real virtue, than all the immeasurable mass of philosophical instructions united.

SERMON VII.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.



MATTHEW, iii. 9.

And think not to say within yourselves, ' We have Abraham to our father :' for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

THE *Jews* were accustomed to pride themselves on their descent from *Abraham*. God, they thought, would never cast off the children of his friend, and the people of his covenant. Both the existence, and the danger, of this error, the Baptist perfectly well understood; and felt himself bound to guard them against its pernicious influence. While, therefore, he urged the absolute necessity of repentance to the remission of sins, he took effectual care to prevent the objections, which, he foresaw, would arise in their minds against his injunctions. For this purpose he anticipated the reply, which they were ready to make; and informed them, that their relation to *Abraham* would be of no avail towards their attainment of eternal life; as they could not but see, if they considered, that God was able of the stones, which lay before them, to raise up children unto *Abraham*. This declaration plainly cut off all the hopes which they derived from this source; and taught them irresistibly, that something, beside their kindred to the Patriarch, was necessary to secure the favour of God.

We, like the *Jews*, are prone to indulge expectations of future good on false grounds; if not on the same, yet on others equally indefensible and dangerous; and, like them, need to be taught the error, and warned of the danger. The declaration in the text is admirably fitted for this purpose. The contemplation of it therefore, and of certain truths flowing from it by necessary inference,

can hardly fail of being useful to us, unless we prevent it by our own opposition.

The doctrine, stripped of the peculiar language of the text, is evidently this :

God is able with infinite ease to create any number of virtuous beings ; and those, possessed of any degree of excellence.

The children of *Abraham*, in the language of the *Jews*, and of course in that of the *Baptist*, denoted such persons, as were within the covenant of grace, and were therefore entitled to the blessings of that covenant : In other words, persons, who, in the Evangelical sense, were virtuous ; and, therefore, objects of the Divine favour.

If God be able to form such beings of stone ; he must be equally able to form them out of nothing. This also, it is equally evident, he can do with infinite ease. The Universe with all its inhabitants he called into existence by his command. With a command, therefore, he can summon into existence any additional number of worlds. He can in the same manner people them with any additional number of inhabitants. Of the beings, whom he has already created, immense multitudes are virtuous. The same work he can accomplish again in the same manner. Such virtuous beings, as he may hereafter create, he can endow with any supposable degree of excellence. He has already created *Angels*. Certainly, then, he can create more : and can fill the universe with *thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers* ; with beings, exalted in their nature above all our comprehension ; nay, of that of *Angels* themselves ; beings, wonderfully enlarged in their understanding, spotless in their disposition, noble in their character, and amiable in all their conduct.

No person, who has read and believed his Bible, or who even admits the existence and character of God ; will question the truth of these positions. Any attempt to prove them would, of course, be trifling. I shall, therefore, proceed to derive from the doctrine certain Inferences, for the sake of which principally I have chosen the text as the foundation of the present discourse.

1. *It follows from this doctrine, that God was the Ultimate End of all his works.* In the language of Paul, *All things were made not only by him, but for him.*

It has been frequently thought, that because God was from eternity perfect and happy, in himself, he cannot be supposed to have made himself the Chief End of his works; but must have aimed supremely at the Happiness of his Creatures. Let me ask: How can creatures, who can be created in any numbers, and of any character, by a word, be in themselves of any importance to the Creator? If they were all to perish at once; the universe might the next moment be filled with others, like them; nay, with others, unspeakably wiser, nobler, and better, than themselves; with beings, on whom he would look with the same or greater complacency; and by whom he would be served in the same manner, or a manner more accordant with his pleasure.

To such a being, the loss of all created Intelligences would be no loss; because it could be ten thousands, or ten millions of times more than supplied in the number and excellency of others, whom a single word could produce in an instant of time.

Of what consequence would be the loss of any enjoyment to us; if with a word we could recall it, or, if we chose, could produce another, a hundred or a thousand, of equal or superior value? Of what importance would be friends, money, or children; if by a wish we could fill their places again with others exactly like them, or with more and better property, friends, or children?

But how evident is it, that things, which are of no importance to God, could not be the ultimate end of his exertions. To him nothing could be of great, or even of real, importance, but himself. All other beings, as he declares in the language of Isaiah concerning the nations of men, *are before him as nothing, and are accounted unto him as less than nothing, and vanity.*

Hence himself must clearly have been the supreme end of all his designs, and labours. To indulge his own benevolence, and display to intelligent creatures his absolute perfection; must have been the moving cause of his Creation, and Providence, throughout eternity.

2. *It is evident from this doctrine, that the Providence of God alike regards, and superintends, all creatures; the least as truly, as the greatest.*

It has been often said, that the Providence of God does not extend to particular men. nor to their concerns. Much less is it

believed by those, who make this assertion, that the same Providence extends to inferior beings ; because they are so much more insignificant, and therefore are so much more beneath the attention of the Creator.

There are many ways in which this doctrine may be proved false and groundless ; particularly by the consideration, that, if these beings are too insignificant to be superintended, they were really too insignificant to be made. Certainly, if it was proper for God to create them, it must be proper for him to superintend them. The same thing also appears evident from the fact, that the things, which are done even for the least of them, are such as none but God can do. His Providential agency is plainly as indispensable for the purposes of preserving their lives, and providing their sustenance, as his Creative agency for giving them existence.

But the doctrine is forcibly refuted by the text. Sparrows, in the view of the text, are as truly important, and necessary to God, as are men, or angels. If angels were to expire ; or men to be annihilated ; better men and better angels could be substituted in their room as easily, as one sparrow can be replaced by another. Sparrows were made because God saw it to be proper to make them ; and are continued and superintended, because this also is his pleasure. It is not my intention here to assert, nor do I at all believe, that sparrows are of the same real value as angels and men. The Scriptures assert what is obviously true, when they inform us, that one man *is of more value than many sparrows*. But God can create men as easily as sparrows ; and angels as easily as either. Hence, in creating or superintending either, he regards the propriety of the act merely ; and not the necessity, or the importance, of the being to himself.

Hence, *sparrows never fall to the ground without his agency*. Hence, *the very hairs of our heads are all numbered by him ; so that there is not one more, nor one less, at any time, than he appoints*. Hence, in a word, every thing is created, and every thing superintended, by his agency ; merely because he thought it proper to give and continue to it such a measure of existence, and such a portion of enjoyments. *For his pleasure they are ; (or exist ;) as for his pleasure they were created*.

3. *It is evident, also, from this doctrine, that such beings as men are, or ever were, are totally unnecessary to God.*

God created man, as he has done every other part of the universe, because he saw, that it was good to create them. In other words, it was a thing which in his view was proper to be done by him; a thing, in which he took pleasure.

But at the same time, and with the same ease, he could have created angels, or beings as much superior to them, as they are to worms; and those in numbers inconceivable. Such beings as men, therefore, could have no inherent importance in his sight, which could render them necessary to him: and their creation was the result, not of their worth, but of his pleasure. Of every stone on this globe he could have raised up a child unto *Abraham*; a virtuous being; who would have *served him* forever in an *acceptable* manner, with *reverence and godly fear*. Thus he might have filled the world with beings, incomparably better than men, although *Adam*, and his race, had never existed.

4. *When men had apostatized from God, it was not from their importance, nor because they were necessary to him, that God restored them.*

Man now was not only insignificant and unnecessary; but was also rebellious, sinful, and odious to his Maker. With infinite ease God might have destroyed the whole race, and repopled the earth with beings incomparably better. Every stone might now have been animated, and informed with a virtuous and immortal mind, devoted to his service, and forever employed in worshipping and glorifying his name.

Why did he at this time regard man at all? Why did he not blot out the whole human race from under heaven? Why did he continue to raise them up through one generation after another? Why did he preserve them from death, provide for them sustenance, and bestow upon them innumerable blessings? Why has he rolled the world around its centre from age to age; and caused *his sun to rise*, and *made his rain descend*, on such *unjust and unthankful* beings? Had he withdrawn his hand, they would all have returned to their original nothing, and have been lost from the remembrance of the universe. Whence did he entertain thoughts of mercy towards them, or any thoughts at all, except of

wrath and indignation? Why did he propose to forgive, to redeem, to sanctify, and to save, them; to restore them to his favour, and to bestow on them the inheritance of eternal life? With a word he could have raised up an innumerable Church, consisting of wiser, better, and universally more deserving, members; all devoted to his praise, and to each other's good. In this way the amazing expense of Redemption, the humiliation and sufferings of his beloved Son would have been spared; and yet the universe have found no part of its inhabitants lacking.

5. Hence, the work of Redemption flowed from the mere goodness of God; and not at all from the worthiness or the importance of the Redeemed, nor from the fact that they were at all necessary to him.

The Character of the redeemed was of no such importance. Antecedently to their redemption, they were merely apostates, and sinners.

Their Number was of no such importance. With a word he could have called into existence a number immeasurably greater. All these might have been sinless. At the same time they might have been wise, great, and exalted, beyond what either we or angels can conceive.

The Church, therefore, must eternally say, "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth;" and through eternity sing, "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be the glory." Whenever, therefore, a sinner is sanctified, and is thus introduced into the kingdom and favour of God; he must of necessity conclude, that his sanctification has not at all proceeded from his own worth and importance. Worth he had none; for he was only a sinner. But if he had had more than an angel, God stood in no possible need of him. The first stone, which he finds in the street, might with infinite ease have been converted into a better being than himself. Not for his importance. Who can be important to Him, who spoke the universe into being; and who, if it were annihilated, could call another into existence in the same manner? Not because he or his services are necessary to God. To Him, who can do these things, no creature can be necessary.

The good pleasure of God is the only cause to be assigned for the sanctification, perseverance, and salvation, of all the redeemed. *Let him, that glorieth, therefore, glory in the Lord.*

Let every sanctified sinner feel, that he was *plucked, as a brand, out of the burning*, when he was on the point of being consumed. Let him acknowledge with wonder and praise, that it was the arm of mercy which saved him, when he was polluted with guilt; under the curse of the Divine Law; obnoxious to the anger of God; an outcast from the virtuous universe; and an heir of the endless sufferings of perdition. Let him remember and feel, that the Being, by whom he was saved, is himself perfectly pure and holy; that *the heavens are not clean in his sight, and that his angels are charged with folly*. Let him feel, that this great and awful Being saw nothing in his moral character, which he could approve or love; nothing, which he did not disapprove and hate; that with these very views of his character he brought him *out of darkness into marvellous light*, and rescued him *from the power of Satan unto himself*; that *not by works of righteousness*, which the sinner had done, *but of his own mere mercy he saved him by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*.

6. *This doctrine teaches us, that there is no hope of escape to the wicked on account of their worth or importance; nor because they are necessary to God; nor because of their numbers.*

The things, which have been already said for the purpose of proving the former positions, furnish abundant evidence of the truth of this. If there is no worth nor importance in the character of a sinner, in any such sense, if he is not in any such sense necessary to God, as to furnish a reason why he should be sanctified; then plainly these things can yield him no hope of escaping from that punishment, which is announced in the Scriptures as the retribution of sinners. To every sinner, whose heart revolts at this declaration; as not improbably the heart of every sinner in this house does; it might be a useful employment to survey the first stone which he finds in the street, and to ask within himself: "Is that stone of any importance to God? But that stone can in a moment be changed into just such an one as I am; nay, into a being transcendently more excellent and lovely. I can see, that the stone is an object of no significance in the Creation. Were it annihilated, the universe would suffer no loss. God sees, that I am equally insignificant. But the stone is merely a negative object: and it has done nei-

ther good nor evil. It cannot, therefore, be odious to the eye of its Maker. I have done only evil; and am therefore only odious. It is impossible that he, who *is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and who cannot look upon sin*, should regard me without abhorrence. He needs not the stone. As little does he need me. The stone is harmless: I have hitherto been a nuisance to the universe; a blot on the face of his Creation; a *smoke in his nostrils*. Should my existence be continued, and with my present disposition; I should continue to be a nuisance to his creatures, and an offence to Him.”

“On what foundation, then, shall I build even a hope of future good? Shall I conclude, that because he has given me hitherto innumerable blessings, he will, therefore, continue to give me more? Can I believe that the abuse of mercies past will, to the eye of God, be a reason for bestowing upon me future mercies? Shall I plead my ingratitude as a title to the Divine favour? Shall I allege the guiltiness of my past life, and the worthlessness of my present character, as a recommendation to Him who has been present at the commission of all my sins, and the omission of all my duties? Will such a recommendation avail? If not; what is to become of me? No, “I will arise, and go to my Father, and say unto him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee; and am no more worthy to be called thy son.’” I will humbly and cheerfully confess my polluted character, my absolute unworthiness of his favour, my desert of his wrath and indignation in time and in eternity. I will present before him my own miserable condition, and my infinite need of his mercy. I will urge the righteousness, the sufferings, and the death, of his beloved Son; the atonement which he hath made for sin, and the reconciliation which he hath accomplished for all returning sinners. I will fly to the compassion of a forgiving God. I will supplicate the renewing influence of the sanctifying Spirit. If these pleas do not avail; I am undone.”

“But I will not despair, *The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of evil. Who knoweth if he will turn, and repent, and leave a blessing behind him? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him, also, freely give us all things?* Christ

himself says, that *he came to seek, and to save, that which was lost*; and that *he came, not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance*. The father of the prodigal bade his whole family rejoice, because a son, who had been *dead*, was *alive again*, and after having been *lost* to him and his family, had been *found* anew. Nay, the Redeemer has said, "There is joy in heaven over one sinner, that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance." I am a *sinner*. I may be of the number of those, who are called to *repentance* by the Son of God. I am *spiritually dead*: I may be made *alive again*. I have long been *lost* to the virtuous universe: I may be *found*. The *joy of heaven* may be renewed over *the repentance* even of such an one, as I am. Author of all mercies, *hast thou but one blessing? Bless me, even me, O my Father.*"

Often have sinners relied for future safety on their numbers; and have felt as if God would not condemn and punish such a vast multitude. No opinion can be more unsafe, or in its consequences more unhappy. If one sinner is thus insignificant, unnecessary, and useless to God; all others sustain exactly the same character. If one sinner is thus odious and guilty; the guilt and the odiousness are only increased by increasing their number. If one is a nuisance to the universe; thousands are only a proportionally greater nuisance. What reason, then, can their multitude furnish to their Creator, either for continuing them in existence, or for delivering them from the punishment which they have merited? To the imagination and the feelings, this consideration is indeed overwhelming: but the understanding is compelled to the conclusion, which has here been made.

Accordingly, when the angels rebelled, the sentence against them was not at all relaxed on account of their multitude. The deluge overwhelmed the old world with a destruction which swept away the whole human race, except the family of *Noah*. All the inhabitants of *the Cities of the plain*, except *Lot* and his family, perished in *the storm of fire and brimstone* which was sent to reward their wickedness. Not an individual, in all these cases, was at all the more safe, nor in any degree less severely punished, because he was accompanied by so many other guilty beings. Why should we expect this consideration to avail any more for

our safety, than for the safety of the sinners, who in these several cases were utterly destroyed?

7. *This doctrine teaches us, that Humility is the true wisdom, interest, and duty of man.*

If we are thus unnecessary to God; if we are thus insignificant; thus useless; thus guilty; thus odious: of what should we be proud?

“Pride,” says the Son of *Sirach*, “was not made for man.” How strongly do the observations which have been made in this discourse, support this interesting declaration! Of what shall we be proud? Of our personal worth? Let us remember, (for if we do not, God will,) that we are sinners. What to his eye must be the moral worth of a sinner? What, indeed, is that of the best of mankind? *Paul*, after all the proofs, which he received of the favour of God; after all his benevolent and wonderful labours; and after all his high attainments in piety; pronounced himself, while writing with the pen of Inspiration, *the chief of sinners*. *David*, *the man after God’s own heart*, says of himself, “I am a worm, and no man. I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Of *Job*, God said, “There was none like him in the earth; a perfect and an upright man; one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” This perfect and upright man said to his Maker, “Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Where could either of these men have found, in their personal character, reasons for indulging pride? The real worth even of such men is alloyed by multiplied sins and infirmities, which render the whole composition odious. Accordingly, it is declared, that *if God should mark iniquity, no man living could stand before him, or be justified in his sight*. Plainly therefore, the best of our race have no foundation on which pride can rest.

Men of inferior excellence possess fewer and feebler virtues. Of course, pride was not made for *them*. Sinners are unpossessed even of these; and not even a single white spot varies the dark and cheerless turpitude, which is the ground-work of their character. Of what then shall *they* be proud? Of their de-

formity, their guilt, their shame, or their approaching condemnation?

But neither they, nor those who are better than they, have any room for the indulgence of pride. *He, who is wise, may indeed be profitable to himself:* But who can be profitable to God? Of what consequence could it have been to this glorious and all-sufficient Being, if the wisest and best man, who ever lived, had not been created? In the possession of all his endowments and acquisitions, and after all his most faithful and useful labours; even when he may truly say, "In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles;" he must still add, "I am nothing." Even when *Paul is the planter, and Apollos the waterer, it will ever be true, that neither he who planteth, nor he who watereth, is any thing; but God, who giveth the increase, is every thing.* The best of men, the most exalted angel, instead of having claims upon his Maker for the services which he has rendered, is only the more indebted to his Maker, the greater and more excellent his endowments are, and the more valuable his services. God only brings us in debt to him by enabling us to serve him; by giving us a disposition to serve him; and by furnishing us with opportunities of performing this service. This debt is mightily increased by his acceptance of our services. It is immeasurably increased by the fact, that he permits those who were once rebels and outcasts, to return to his service; and qualifies them for it by bestowing on them anew, in the work of sanctification, a sincere desire to be employed in his service. Sinners think the service of God a task; a burthen, imposed on them by a hard Master, and a kind of dire necessity. No opinion can be more false, or more unhappy. Instead of all this, it is the first privilege, the highest honour, the greatest blessing, which he can enjoy. It will ever be true, that "the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart" of every good man; that "they are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold;" that "they are sweeter, also, than honey, and the honeycomb;" and that "in keeping of them there is great reward."

Away, then, with all the pride and vanity of the human heart; especially with the pride and vanity of our own hearts. Away with our self-flattery, our self-justification, and our self-righteousness.

Christ, although *he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.* The spirit, which he here manifested, he has required us to assume. This very account of him is introduced by *St. Paul* with these words, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ." "Take my yoke upon you," says the Saviour himself, "and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart." In the world of sin, pride always claims, and not unfrequently receives, a kind of honour from the miserable sinners, by whom it is inhabited. In the world of righteousness, *humility is always before honour*; and a qualification, absolutely indispensable to secure the respect of the virtuous minds by which it is inhabited, and the approbation of the glorious Being by whom it is governed.

3. *Let no sinner presume upon the continuance of his life as a reason for his persisting in sin.*

For what reason should the life of a sinner be continued? Is it his wisdom? Is it his worth? Is it his importance to the Divine kingdom? Is it, that God needs his services? Is it, that he renders any services to God? Is it, that he labours to be a blessing to the universe? How obviously must all these questions be answered in the negative! But if he neither pleases, obeys, nor glorifies, his Maker; nor does good to his fellow-creatures; what reason can he possibly allege, why his life should be prolonged? Were he annihilated; or swept into the pit of destruction; the universe, instead of suffering an injury or experiencing a loss, would, so far as we are able to judge, only be delivered from a nuisance. Even were the loss real, it could be repaired, and more than repaired, by a word. In his stead might rise up a child of *Abraham*; a *Paul*; an Angel.

Can even the sinner infatuated as he is, can any sinner in this house, seriously believe, that God will be induced to prolong his life, merely to give him additional opportunities of persisting in his obstinacy and impiety, his ingratitude and rebellion? Can He, *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, be induced to lengthen out the days of an apostate, that he may anew dishonour his Maker; crucify his Redeemer afresh: *and do more and*

more *despite to the Spirit of grace*? Can JEHOVAH be pleased to hear *his glorious and fearful name* profaned by a human tongue? Can He look with a smile upon reiterated falsehood, fraud, and injustice, practised by one human being upon another? Can the foul retreats of gluttony, drunkenness, and lewdness, be objects of his complacency? Who can hesitate to believe, that He will *avenge himself of such adversaries* to his character, law, and government; and wipe them as a blot out of His Creation?

But, all this notwithstanding, the sinner has no reason to despair of the mercy of God. The work of *saving them that were lost* was not begun, without the most ample view of its wisdom and propriety. God did not send his Son, to live a life of humiliation in this miserable world, and to *die the accursed death*, without counting the cost. He did not send his Spirit, to sanctify the polluted soul of man, and to wash the rebel in *the blood which cleanseth from all sin*, without being perfectly aware of the whole nature and absolute propriety of this stupendous transaction. Accordingly, we are told, that *the gifts, and calling, of God are without repentance*. From the Beginning to the present time he has gone on giving his renewing and purifying grace to just such sinners, and calling them into his kingdom; and has never once repented, that he began the work; nor for a moment intermitted its continuance. Turn your eyes to the heavenly world; and you will there find millions of just such sinners walking in the light of eternal day. There you will find *David*, once an adulterer and a murderer. There you will find *Paul*, once a blasphemer and a persecutor. There you will find *Peter*, who denied his Master, and perjured himself. There you will find an endless multitude more, whose sins, drawn out in order and displayed in their proper colours, would overwhelm you as well as *them* with amazement and horror. *But they are washed; they are sanctified; they are justified; in the blood of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

With this wonderful object before him, what sinner can rationally despair of the divine mercy? What sinner will not be encouraged to forsake his sins, and to hope for pardon and acceptance? Not indeed from any apprehensions of his own worth, his importance in the divine kingdom, or any need which he may

suppose God has of him, or his services; but from mere grace, from the overflowing mercy and goodness of his Creator.

With this subject sinners usually begin wrong; and thence both think and act, in a manner dangerously erroneous. Usually, at least, they place all their hopes in themselves; in something, which they are; something, which they have done; or something which they have not done; their importance in the Divine kingdom; some goodness of character, which they suppose themselves to possess; or their freedom from sin, existing in such a degree as to make it impossible for God to punish them hereafter. These, to say the least, are all mistaken and unhappy foundations on which to rest our hopes of salvation. The true ground of a sinner's hope is not, that he is so good, or in so small a degree wicked; not that he is undeserving of punishment; but that God is so willing to forgive his sin. On this foundation he may safely build his hopes. All else is sand: this is a rock which can never be moved.

9. This doctrine teaches every Christian to feel and acknowledge, that both his character and his hopes, are all derived from the Sovereign Pleasure of God.

Look into your hearts and lives, my Brethren; and ask yourselves whether there is, or ever was, any thing in them, which, even in your own opinion, God could consider as a reason why he should sanctify and save you. Is there, has there ever been, any thing in your character or your conduct, which you are able to allege as a reason why God should receive you into his favour? When you take a retrospect of what you have been, or what you have done; do you find any thing by which you would be willing to be tried, and on the ground of which you would be willing to have your allotments fixed for eternity? You are undoubtedly accustomed, at times, to examine the foundation of your hopes. In such examinations, on what have you reposed yourselves? Has it been your own righteousness; or has it been the merits of your Redeemer, and the mercy of your Creator?

You are often summoned to the table of Christ. Mark the wonders which it presents to your view. Consider who He was, that is here commemorated; what he did; and what he suffered. Remember, that stones of the street might have been in your place;

animated with living souls ; changed into men, better than yourselves ; and now looking forward with brighter hopes of a happy eternity.

With this affecting consideration in full view, let each of you ask himself, “ Why was I made to *hear the voice of the Son of God, and live?* Why was I not a Heathen, an Infidel, an Atheist? Why was I not cast off forever? Why am I not now *weeping and wailing in the blackness of darkness and suffering the vengeance of eternal fire?* Why am I permitted to sing the praises of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love? Why am I permitted to rejoice in innumerable blessings, which are past ; and to supplicate for more, and greater blessings, yet to come? Why can I look forward to death, the grave, and the Judgment, not only without horror, but even with hope? Why am I able on the wings of faith to enter eternity, and humbly to expect as my unchangeable portion there *an exceeding and eternal weight of glory?*” In answer to all these questions you will be compelled to exclaim, “ Even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

SERMON VIII.

GOD'S WAYS NOT AS OUR WAYS.



ISAIAH lv. 8, 9.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith JEHOVAH.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways ; and my thoughts than your thoughts.

WHENEVER we consider, originally, a revelation of the Will of God as a subject of investigation, we are, perhaps always, prepared either to discover, or to imagine. difficulties, attending such a work. That it may be attended with difficulties, is universally admitted ; that it must be, is to my own mind equally evident. Of these some will owe their origin to our disposition, and others to our ignorance. The disposition of man is evidently opposed to what must be the will of so perfect and glorious a being as God, and to the duties which such a being cannot fail to require. The actual expressions of the will of God in his providence are, in multiplied instances, strenuously opposed by our race. To question, to murmur, and to rebel against, the Divine Government is extensively, as well as plainly, characteristic of man, and clearly congenial to the human heart. A revelation, disclosing to us further accounts of the divine pleasure, and making it more distinctly known, must accord with those parts of that pleasure, which are discovered in creation and providence. It must, therefore, be regarded as a thing of course, that we should be prepared to find fault with such a revelation. Nay, it ought to be expected, that we should murmur against it with more dis-

satisfaction, and oppose it with more hostility, because it would more distinctly unfold the will of its Author. If the character and pleasure of God, when seen imperfectly, awaken dislike; the same things, when more fully seen, must awaken greater dislike in the same mind.

But *all* the difficulties, attending such a work, do not arise from our dispositions. Not a small number of them are derived from our ignorance. The works of God are filled with difficulties of this nature. It is rationally to be supposed, that such a revelation would, in greater or less degrees, be fraught with them also. When things, which we have not known before, are revealed to us; the revelation necessarily communicates various other things, with which those are inseparably connected. The things revealed are naturally attended with the same difficulties, or at least with a part of them, which are found in the works of God; and the things, connected with these, and necessarily yet imperfectly disclosed in such a revelation, must involve more if not greater difficulties, from the imperfection of the disclosure. As the field of knowledge is boundless; and as our faculties continue the same, whatever the revelation may be; our perplexities must increase with every enlargement of its discoveries. Every thing revealed to us, must of course disclose, *imperfectly*, many with which it is connected: and our perplexities must multiply at every step in the progress of the revelation.

Accordant with this account, I readily acknowledge, is the nature of the Scriptures; *the professed revelation of the character, and will, of God.* There are in this volume *many things, which are hard to be understood*; difficulties, which will seem such to a mind well disposed; which will puzzle *all* readers, and leave *most* not unfrequently in the dark.

To show that these things are no objections against the Scriptures, and ought not for a moment to perplex those who believe in them, or hinder the faith of those who do not, is the design of the following discourse. It is my intention to show, that *these difficult and incomprehensible things are things of course, and in the nature of the case necessary and unavoidable.* Should I succeed in this attempt; it will be seen, that no difficulty, which becomes such merely because we cannot unravel it or comprehend

its nature and connections, ought at all to hinder our belief. When the difficulty arises solely out of the complication and greatness of the subject, and the comparative littleness of our minds ; it can never be an objection against the doctrine which it is supposed to embarrass. If this be not admitted, we are left without any means of obtaining satisfaction in our present state. Nor shall we be less at a loss, at every period of our existence. In whatever degree our faculties may hereafter be invigorated or our information enlarged, it will still be equally true, that the ways and works of God will, throughout eternity, be incomprehensible by our minds. Indeed, a little thought will convince us, that, the more we know, the more we shall perceive which is yet to be known. All this will to us be mysterious. The objects, which are partially understood, will ever involve mysteries : and, as these objects are multiplied, mysteries will be also multiplied.

The *thoughts* of God, mentioned in the text, naturally *denote his Plans, or Counsels* ; and the *ways* of God, *his Counsels carried into execution* ; or, in other words, *his Works, both of creation and providence*. These in the text are said to be *higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth* : i. e. they are immeasurably distant from ours, and incomprehensibly more exalted.

With these explanations, it will be easily seen, that the text declares the following doctrines.

I. *That the purposes, plans, and actions, of God, are exceedingly unlike ours* ; and,

II. *That they are beyond measure more noble, and excellent, than ours*.

To illustrate these doctrines, and to derive from them some practical remarks, will be the combined object of this discourse.

1st. That the purposes, plans, and actions, of God are exceedingly unlike ours is easily, and unanswerably, evinced by a comparison of the character of God with that of ourselves.

We are but just introduced into existence. Our powers are feeble, and very limited. Our knowledge is scarcely begun ; and at the same time is mingled with many errors. The constitution, by which we hold our present life, is absolutely dependent, frail, *crushed before the moth*, and hastening to the grave. We are also sinful creatures. Our disposition is plainly opposed to the will of

our Creator. What he chooses we dislike : what he commands we refuse. His conduct we arraign : and against his government we rebel.

God, on the contrary, is infinitely great, wise, and good. All things possible, and actual, are perfectly seen, and known, by his Omniscient eye : all actual things he has done : all possible things he can do. His moral character is infinitely perfect ; the sum of all wisdom, justice, holiness, goodness, and truth. From this character are derived his law and his government ; both perfect like himself ; both aiming at the best ends, and accomplishing them in the best manner ; both requiring the best conduct, and claiming for their Author the supreme adoration, confidence, and love, of all Intelligent creatures.

It is hardly necessary to add, that the purposes, plans, and actions, of beings, so totally unlike, must differ equally with their characters.

2dly. *The same truth is evident, also, from the Nature, and the End, of the purposes, and plans, formed by God, compared with those of men.*

The plans formed by ourselves, are calculated for a little spot of earth, and for a moment of time. Those of the Infinite mind are intended to reach through eternity, and immensity, to comprise all existence ; and to include all the actions, and all the destinies, of the endless multitude of creatures which he has made. The consequences, which arise out of them are, innumerable, and incomprehensible to any mind, beside that to which they owe their existence.

Our own plans respect chiefly, or wholly, ourselves. and a few other beings around us, most or all of whom are our contemporaries, and appear and vanish together with ourselves. Those of God respect, immediately, all beings which have existed, or will exist, in the immense of duration. The purposes of God, therefore, are great, public, and disinterested : while ours are little, insignificant, and selfish.

3dly. *The same truth is evident also from Facts.*

In the first place. *The Creation, so far as it is known to us, is exceedingly different from what, if left to ourselves, we should have contrived or imagined.*

That this world is in many respects unsuited, in the view of mankind, to the character of a perfect God is unanswerably certain from the fact, that the present state of things in it has, in many ages and countries, been urged as supposed proof, that it either was not created or is not governed by such a being. So great have the difficulties, arising from this source, appeared to the human eye, that some of our race have denied the existence of such a being. Some have considered the God, whom they acknowledged, as limited in his attributes. Some have disbelieved the creation of the world; and some have asserted, that God, instead of governing it, has left it to itself; and permitted every thing which it contains to go on without his interference. For all these opinions a primary argument, alleged, has been *the unsuitableness of the work to the character of a perfect Agent*. But, if it appears to us unsuited to such a character, we certainly should have contrived, if left to ourselves, a world of a very different nature.

Every man accustomed to reflection will perceive, if he attends to his own thoughts, that he is employed, no small part of his time, in wondering that things around him should have been such as they actually are. He will also perceive, that very often he not only wonders, but finds fault with the state of the creation, and that in many particulars; and questions, at least, whether it was proper that God should make the world such as it appears to him.

Three parts out of four of this globe are ocean; apparently useless, and lost. Why should so great a proportion be created seemingly for no valuable end? Or, if there be such an end, why should it not appear to us, the only beings within our knowledge to whom it can be of any serious importance?

Of the remaining fourth a large proportion is either a region of frost and ice, or a collection of sterile sands, or a mass of rocky wastes, or a diffusion of marshes incapable of cultivation. All these are uninhabitable by man; and seem to answer no purpose, worthy of a perfect God.

A great part of the productions of this world, also, are, apparently, either useless or noxious. Animals in great numbers are fierce, wild, and disposed only to prey either on man, or on other

animals of inferior strength, and much more desirable natures. Others are stupid, sluggish, and fitted merely to exist, to eat, and to die ; of no use to us, and of little to themselves. Others, still, are poisonous ; and are only hostile to human comfort, and to human life. Who would expect from the hand of the Creator the tiger, the sloth, the rattlesnake, and the scorpion ? Who can explain the existence of those innumerable insects, which infest the air, the earth, and the sea ; and often diminish the happiness, destroy the health, and cut off the life, of mankind ? Why were formed those loathsome reptiles, which create pain by their very appearance, and by their actions awaken distress and horror ? Why are the regions of nature peopled by those millions of animalcula, which, while they add nothing when alive to the welfare of man, destroy his life after they are dead, by the pestilential exhalations to which they give birth ?

In the vegetable world, mysteries, and the perplexities which grow out of them, are exceedingly increased, both in number and degree. Productions of this class are wonderfully numerous in their kinds and sorts. Yet how few of them have, during the long continued flight of ages, been discovered to possess any value to mankind. How many of them are apparently useless even to animals ? How many of them are poisonous ; and, so far as we can discern, formed to no end, but to destroy either comfort or life. Why were they created ? Who has sufficient knowledge to answer this question ?

Secondly. *The works of Providence are still more strange, and perplexing.*

The most perplexing of all considerations is *the existence of Moral evil* : and whether we suppose it to have been immediately created, or permitted, it is equally inexplicable by us. Had we been employed in forming conceptions concerning a scheme of creation, and providence, to be accomplished by the Infinite mind, we should have certainly expected, that such a mind would fill a world with beings, who were only *virtuous and happy*. All these, also, we should expect to be equally virtuous, and equally happy. How distant from this scheme is that, actually presented to our view ? The great body of mankind are evidently and grossly sinful. Few, very few, seem to be virtuous at all : and even

these are miserably defective. The happiness, enjoyed by man, is, also, in a manner generally similar, contradictory to every expectation which we should have naturally and originally formed.

This subject will be better realized by a more particular exhibition. I observe, therefore, that we should expect all men *to know, worship, and obey, the true God only*. But the greater part of the human race have, in every age, been ignorant not only of the character, but even of the existence, of the true God; and have neither worshipped nor obeyed him at all. Heathenism has evidently predominated throughout this globe during most of the ages of time; and its inhabitants have prostrated themselves before demons, men, beasts, birds, reptiles, insects, vegetables, and images of gold, silver, brass, wood, and stone.

We certainly should look for an universal prevalence of *Truth*; both as the object of belief, and the subject of declarations. Error has however been believed, and falsehood declared, in every age and country, to a degree amazing and portentous.

In a world, made by the God of peace, we should expect *peace to reign*. War, on the contrary, has been the business, the pleasure, and the sport, of mankind.

Justice, and Benevolence, ought plainly to be the controlling principles of rational and immortal beings. But Oppression has in this world been the greatest source of misery, and the most bitter theme of complaint, from the beginning. Cruelty and Injustice have, to a great extent, reigned without a rival, and ravaged without end.

In a world, formed by the Source and the Author of all perfection, we should naturally suppose that *health and plenty* must abound. Famine and Disease have, however, in an almost unlimited degree claimed the present world as their own, and swept their millions to an untimely grave.

In a world, governed by the Author of all Excellence, we should expect the good to be prosperous, and the wicked, if any wicked could be supposed to exist, to be afflicted and unhappy. How different has been the fact. How often has *Nero* been on the throne, and *Polycarp* at the stake? So different has been the actual state of things, that even *Asaph* was well nigh overthrown

by the sight of the successful lives, and quiet deaths, of wicked men in his own time.

Half of mankind die under five years of age. For what purpose were these innumerable millions created? Where is the philosophy, which can point out the End, accomplished by their ephemeral existence?

Such is a summary, and imperfect, view of the works of creation and providence, on the mysterious side. In surveying it, how soon and how absolutely are our minds lost? At the very commencement of our researches we enter a labyrinth, to which there is no clue; or launch upon an ocean, without a bottom, without a pole-star, and without a shore.

Still, the universe is the work of God; and it is governed by the same God. Of these great truths the evidence is complete. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech concerning him,* by which his presence, character, and agency, are proved beyond all reasonable debate; *and night unto night sheweth knowledge of him,* which has forced itself upon the human mind with irresistible conviction, and put even the voluntary blindness of Atheism to shame and confusion. The heavens above, and the earth beneath, unite their voice in declaring the existence and the glory of their Author. The sun and the numerous worlds which form the planetary system, in their appearance and their forms, their distances and their revolutions, silently indeed, but in language which cannot be misconstrued, declare themselves to be the work of an Infinite hand. In this world the mineral, vegetable, and animal, kingdoms make the same declaration concerning themselves in the same decisive manner. A single vegetable, or a single animal, unfolds a combination of power and wisdom, attributable to no mind less than infinite. The human body, a world of wonders, teaches the same doctrine with evidence which cannot be controverted. No skill, which was not divine, could contrive; no power, not unlimited, could construct; a machine, so complicated, so mysterious, furnished with such astonishing faculties, or fitted to fulfil such amazing ends.

The *Eye*, itself is ample proof of *the finger of God*. What but Omniscience, and Omnipotence, could originate life, or pour it

incessantly through its thousand channels? Who, but JEHOVAH, could create a *Mind*; and invest it with the amazing powers of thinking and choice; enable it to expand its views into eternity; and adorn it with the beauty and glory of virtue?

In the *Providential kingdom* the evidences of the same exalted agency are neither less numerous, nor less satisfactory. The visible control of the universe is a work, which alike demands and displays perfections, incapable of limitation. Both the means and the ends, when understood by us, and so far as they are understood, are on the one hand worthy of a God, and on the other are decisive proofs that they are the work of a God. The divine Wisdom, like all other wisdom, is manifested in the selection of valuable ends, and the adoption of means happily suited to their accomplishment. Such ends, and such means, are visible in the circuit of the seasons; in the formation of food; in the succession of day and night; in the diffusion of light and warmth, life and enjoyment, over the face of the earth. The wisdom, visible in these things, admits of no bounds. The mind, by which these were contrived and done, and done uniformly, with absolute ease, in all places, towards all the beings interested in them, and without any approximation to a close; can plainly do every thing which it pleases.

Accordingly, thinking men in every age and country, astonished at these displays of transcendent power and transcendent skill, have pronounced them to be the works of a God. Nay, the Common mind, at least as universally, has drawn up the same conclusion; and found the footsteps of Omniscience and Omnipotence, wherever it has turned its eye. Could we look through the universe; could we understand the nature and design of the innumerable beings, of which it is composed; the purposes, which they were intended to accomplish; and their adaptation to these purposes; the fitness of the parts to the places which they occupy; their relation to each other and to the whole; and the glorious destination, towards which they are all making a silent but certain progress: could we enter that eternal world, in which they all find their proper use and consummation: there cannot be a rational doubt, that we should be equally satisfied of the universal

prevalence of the same wisdom and goodness, throughout every part of his immense and eternal kingdom.

REMARKS.

From this view of the divine agency, and the works which it has accomplished both in creation and providence, it is evident,

1st. *That we ought, on the most rational principles, to believe many things, which we can neither comprehend nor unravel.*

A multitude of mankind, styled by themselves philosophers, and often so styled by others, seem to have resolved that they will believe nothing, but what they can thoroughly understand. In this determination, also, they appear to glory; as being honourable to their character, and a proof of that mental independence which mankind are so ready to challenge to themselves, and of which with not a little self-complacency they so frequently boast. It cannot be denied, that this scheme of thinking is very grateful to pride: nor can it any more be questioned, that it is disgraceful to our character as rational beings. In the whole list of those who pretend to think in this manner, there is not, there never was, a single individual, whose conduct through a single day, or even a single hour, accorded with his professions. Every such individual believes, continually, a multitude of things which he can neither comprehend nor unravel. Not one of them can go a step toward explaining how, or by what power, he thinks at all; or chooses, or speaks, or moves; or even lives. To be consistent with himself, therefore, he ought to believe none of these facts. Nor ought one of these persons to eat, because he cannot conceive how he can masticate, or digest, his food; or in what manner it can contribute to the support of his life. No more ought he to attempt to speak; nor to move his hands, or feet. If he would act consistently; he would, instead of making such attempts, fix himself as a statue, or a log, wherever he might happen to be; and bid adieu to every exertion. In this manner he would at least claim the praise of consistency: now he is only a mass of self-contradictions. Nothing can be more contemptible or ridiculous, than professedly to adopt this scheme of thinking, and then, instead

of conforming to it universally, apply it only to subjects of religion, and the thoughts and ways of God.

It is perfectly evident *a priori*, that the works of this incomprehensible Being must perpetually defy the investigation of such creatures as we are. A mere comparison of the extent of these works with the extent of our minds will show irresistibly, that the former can never be measured by the latter. A small part of them we may comprehend, so far as a few particulars, relative to their manner of existence and their relations, are concerned. Of the nature of substances, whether material or immaterial; the nature of causes, and the manner in which they operate; we know nothing. With facts we may be extensively acquainted, and with the relations of these facts; and of the beings by whom they are originated, our knowledge may be considerable. Of the attributes, also, of these beings we have, to some extent, a just apprehension. Beyond this our minds are not formed to advance; and accordingly have never advanced.

But to refuse our assent to the existence and operations of such beings as are presented to our view, were the refusal in our power, would be to determine that we would employ none of our faculties, nor benefit ourselves by them, merely because they are not infinite. An archangel might with exactly the same propriety act in the same manner. For, vast as the powers of such a being are, they approach no nearer to a complete comprehension of the Works of God than the faculties of man. To enlarge his knowledge of them will be his employment throughout endless ages: and, the more he knows, the more he will perceive which is yet to be known.

2dly. *In every attempt to investigate the works of God we ought, originally, to expect to find them widely different from our preconceptions.*

We ought to expect, that they will be attended, extensively, with mysteries; that they will be strange; that they will be incomprehensible; and that in many respects they will contravene our previous opinions. To this conclusion we are irresistibly led by a perfect analogy. All the works of God, with which we have hitherto been acquainted, have possessed this character; have

eluded our utmost research, and passed beyond the limits of our comprehension. There cannot be a rational hope, that others, with which we are yet to become acquainted, will appear in any other manner. They are all works of the same God; are effects of the same boundless power and skill; and must therefore be equally removed beyond the grasp of our understandings. This, then, is to be universally presupposed; and, instead of awakening disappointment, ought to be regarded as a thing of course.

3dly. *When we find any works of God to possess this strange and mysterious character, we are to believe them not the less accordant with his wisdom and goodness.*

Wherever we understand even in a moderate degree the works of God, they are plainly exhibitions of power and skill, immeasurably superior to our own, and of a benevolence equally transcendent. Analogy here also perfect compels us, if we would act rationally, to admit the same conclusion here, with the same universality, as in the former case. Not a reason can be given, why we should not admit the unknown works of God to be equally worthy of his character, as those which are known. Certainly such a reason cannot be found in our ignorance.

4thly. *From these observations the Necessity of a Revelation is evident.*

In the thoughts and ways of God are involved all our duty, and all our interest. Here we must find, if we ever find, the directions which are to regulate our duty, and the motives by which we shall be influenced to perform it. Here we are to gain, if we ever gain, the happiness of which our minds are capable; and to reach, if we ever reach, the destination of Intelligent and immortal beings. But, that the thoughts and ways of God may be of any use to us, it is absolutely necessary for us to know them, so far at least as to perceive in them these directions and these motives: that they may regulate and influence our moral conduct. Peculiarly it is necessary, it is indispensable, that we learn what is the End, which our Creator proposes in all this vast apparatus spread around us in the universe. Voluntarily to coincide with his designs, and with the end which is the consummation of them

all, and to devote to its accomplishment all our faculties and efforts, is all that is intended by the word Virtue; all that will be useful to us; all that will be approved by God.

But, from the mysterious nature of the divine works which has been the subject of these observations, it is evident beyond debate, that by such an examination, as we are able to make of the works themselves, neither their nature, nor the end for which they were made, can be understood in such a manner as to furnish us with the necessary rules to guide us, or the motives to influence us, in the performance of our duty. In vain have mankind hitherto attempted to find these mighty objects in the book of Creation, or the book of Providence, written with any such explicitness as to satisfy the conscience, direct the worship, guide the moral conduct, or unfold with sufficient probability the future destiny, of the soul. The uncertainty and the obscurity which have ever attended these subjects, must in the same circumstances attend it forever. Superior minds to those, which were possessed by some of the heathen philosophers, cannot be rationally expected to exist; nor superior efforts to those which they made; nor more enlightened views than those which they formed; nor juster conclusions than those which they drew. Yet how imperfect were their views; how false were their conclusions! The difficulty lies in the nature of the human mind, and in the circumstances in which it is placed. A child must ever learn his duty with extreme imperfection and extreme difficulty, if he were to derive it solely from looking on the fruits of his father's labours. How much would he need a direct communication of his father's pleasure, in order to learn the nature of that conduct which would satisfy his demands. But men know less, and in the same manner of investigation must ever know less, concerning the pleasure of God, than a child may know concerning the pleasure of his parent.

The prime difficulty in this most interesting of all concerns, and that which meets us at the threshold, is to learn whether God is reconcileable to sinners; and if this be possible, to learn further, on what conditions, and by what means, the reconciliation can be effected. As we are all sinners; these inquiries are equally interesting to all. But on these subjects the works of

creation and providence return us no answer. We are stopped, therefore, at the commencement of our investigation; and compelled to return in the anxiety of suspense and the gloom of disappointment, to the spot whence we set out.

5thly. *Should a book, professing to be a revelation, extensively contravene our preconceptions of what a revelation ought to be; such a fact would not at all lessen its claims to this character.*

A revelation must of course be a work of God. All the other works of God are of such a nature, as plainly to contravene our preconceptions. This, it is presumed, has been clearly shown to be their general character. But, if all other works of God are of this nature, it is reasonably supposed that a revelation, which is a work of the same Being, should possess the same nature also. Every agent works like himself: and whatever he does must be expected to have imprinted on it more or less of his own character.

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament profess themselves to be a revelation from God; and have always been assailed with a multitude of objections, because they have in many ways not answered to the previous opinions of mankind; at least, of the objectors themselves. But, if these observations are just, every objection derived from this source is groundless.

This subject deserves to be examined with some particularity. I therefore observe, that *the manner in which the Scriptures are written has been objected to their authority as a revelation.* They are partly *historical*: and the history, which they contain, is principally confined to a single nation; and extensively to individuals of that nation. That nation also was through a great part of its national existence, and has been ever since, distinguished by being generally and very grossly sinful: while not a small number of the individuals, whose actions are recorded, sustained a similar character.

Another part of these writings consists of *a Code of laws both civil and religious.* The religious laws were never designed for any other people, and have long since been abolished. The civil laws were, in many instances, unsuited to the circumstances of any other people; and were, therefore, never intended to regulate *their* affairs. Hence it would seem, that, thus far, both were useless to the rest of mankind.

Another part of the Scriptures is *poetical*. There are those, who regard poetry as a trifling art; claiming little regard from men of sense, and still less becoming the dignity of Inspiration.

Another considerable part of the same volume is made up of *familiar letters*. This kind of writing is supposed to be much inferior in gravity, solemnity, and dignity, to a *formal, didactic, or philosophical*, work: the kind of writing, which the objectors, if the subject had been left to their determination, would have probably preferred to every other.

Similar objections have been made to the manner, *in which certain parts of the Scriptures are written*. Particularly the *Prophecies* have been sometimes censured, because they are *too general and obscure*; and sometimes, because they are *too particular and explicit*. The *style*, in the view of some individuals, is *too simple*; in the view of others, *too abrupt*; and, in the view of many, *too devoid of art and elegance*.

Another source of objections to the Scriptures is found in their *Doctrines*. Particularly, multitudes have been dissatisfied with them because they are mysterious. Of this class are those, concerning the Decrees of God; the Trinity; the Deity, and Humanity, of Christ; the Personality, and Agency, of the Holy Spirit; the Incarnation; the Atonement; the Renovation of the human soul; the Resurrection; and the endless Punishment of the wicked. It is hardly necessary for me to remark how numerous the objections against these have been; or how often they have been repeated.

The Precepts of the Scriptures have not been less censured; particularly for their strictness, their extent, their unbending nature, and their want of adaptation to the nature and circumstances of man.

I am well aware, that many answers have been given to these objections, and that more might be given, amply sufficient to remove them out of the way. It might be shown with no great difficulty, that the manner in which the Scriptures are written, is happier than any which it has been proposed to substitute for it; that, so far as they are intelligible to us, the doctrines accord with truth, and the precepts with righteousness; and that, where they are mysterious, there is nothing in them which violates the dic-

tates of our reason; although there are many things which transcend the limits of our investigation. To do this, however, or any part of it, is not at all included in my present design. I am perfectly willing, for my present purpose, that as many of the things specified as the objectors please, shall be considered as difficult, mysterious and inexplicable.

But the objectors are bound to remember, and if possessed of any candour must willingly remember,

First, *That a Revelation is the work of God.* As, therefore, all the other works of God are mysterious and inexplicable; it ought to be taken for granted, that a Revelation must sustain the same character. Should I be asked, Why, if it is thus mysterious, it is called a Revelation, since to reveal is to discover; the answer is at hand. It does actually discover innumerable things, before unknown by man; explains and settles innumerable more, which would otherwise have been, as without its assistance they had ever been, obscure and doubtful; and that it discloses with sufficient clearness *parts* of many other subjects, with respect to each of which the *whole* is necessarily incomprehensible by us. The parts revealed were necessary to us; and are therefore revealed: while that which is unnecessary is withheld. A Revelation, formed in this manner, is beyond a doubt all that we need. Accordingly, the Scriptures have been found perfectly competent to all the wants of mankind, both as a rule of duty and as a guide to eternal life. It is remarkable that plain men have ever found them sufficiently clear and comprehensive, for their own use: and none, but those who were professedly learned, have ever been troubled with these difficulties.

Secondly, *A Revelation is necessarily an account of the thoughts and ways of God, which we every where see, so far as we see them at all, attended with many mysteries, incomprehensible, and inexplicable.* If then, a Revelation is to be a true and just account of these inexplicable things; it must of course and to a considerable extent be mysterious. The very things, which are the most plain and obvious, are in the very nature of the case connected with others less plain. These, again, are inseparable from others still more obscure; and these with others still more remote from our investigation. Wherever, therefore, a Revelation should

stop ; such an one I mean as would be of any serious importance to us ; such an one as would at all deserve the name ; it must necessarily be mysterious : both because it must be an account of the character, agency, and works, of God ; and because, from the inseparable connection of things in the created system, a disclosure of the plainest must involve a partial disclosure of others eluding our research.

Thirdly, *If the Scriptures contained nothing mysterious ; they would want one proof of being a Revelation.* What one man could completely comprehend, another, for aught that appears, might have devised. The very mysteries, objected to the Scriptures, carry with them decisive evidence, that they neither were nor could be invented by man.

6thly. *Objections against a Revelation from what, it is supposed, God ought to do, are destitute of weight, as well as of decency.*

“ Who,” saith *St. Paul*, “ hath known the mind of the Lord, and who hath been his counsellor ? ” Let me vary this phraseology, and ask ; Who *can* know the mind of the Lord, and who *can* be his counsellor ? Who can determine what ought to be done by a Mind, boundless in its attributes ; designing and acting for immensity and eternity ? Who can tell the nature and design of even a minute part of what he has done ? Who, much more, can tell or even remotely conjecture, what he ought to do ?

On these subjects to philosophize is folly in the abstract. They are so entirely removed beyond our reach, that it is impossible for us to know any thing which can be of any value. No efforts of the most capacious human mind have, hitherto, been able even to lay hold on them. Very many ingenious men have employed themselves, with no small labour, in attempting to form schemes of creation and providence ; and in determining what was proper, and what was improper, to be done by the Ruler of all things. Unsatisfied with that which is disclosed in the Bible, they have wished to substitute a plan of their own for that of God. By this plan they have not only chosen to interpret the designs, for which the beings and events, which compose the great system, were formed ; but have strenuously insisted that their fellow-men should adopt this interpretation. To the same plan they have not only bent their own creed, but, with a sufficient degree of as-

surance, have required the Creator to conform his conduct. Wretched philosophers! Miserable men! How much more rationally, and justly, would they have acted, had they exclaimed with a man incomparably wiser than themselves, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me : it is high ; I cannot attain to it."

What is it, that we attempt to comprehend, and explain? The thoughts and works of an Infinite mind : plans, filling eternity and immensity : a train of causes and effects, begun here and reaching in a regular chain through endless duration : causes and effects, now existing, to be explained by consequences, situated in the remote regions of being. Who are we, that thus resolutely enter upon this mighty task? Worms of the dust. When were we born? Yesterday. What do we know? Nothing.

SERMON IX.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY BROUGHT TO LIGHT BY
THE GOSPEL. SERMON I.



2 TIMOTHY i. 10.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life, and immortality to light through the Gospel.

IN this passage of Scripture, Christ, according to the common translation, is said to have *abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the Gospel*. The word, which is rendered *hath abolished* is καταργησαντος; the proper meaning of which is *to render vain or ineffectual*, i. e. *to deprive a thing of its efficacy*. The word, rendered *hath brought to light*, is φωτισαντος, which signifies *to illuminate; to cast a strong light upon; to set, or exhibit, in a clear light*. The words in the original for *life and immortality* are ζωην και αφθαρσιαν; *life and incorruption*. The life here mentioned is unquestionably the life beyond the grave. The incorruption is an attribute of that life; and may refer, without any impropriety, either to the body, or the mind, of him who will possess it; or, with equal propriety, to both. In Hebrew phraseology, *life and incorruption* are the same as *incorruptible life*. But incorruption, applied to this subject, is the same thing with immortality. The words may, of course, with the strictest propriety, be rendered *immortal life*. I would, therefore, translate the whole verse in the following manner: *And is now made manifest through, or by means of, the appearing of our*

Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath rendered death ineffectual and exhibited immortal life in a clear, strong light through, or by means of, the Gospel. Death is rendered ineffectual by the prevention of its dreadful consequences; the sufferings, destined to follow it in the future world. These our Saviour has effectually prevented by the atonement, which he has made for sin, and the application of its blessings to all those who believe on his name. Every such believer will be admitted, notwithstanding the condemning sentence of the divine law, to the enjoyment of that immortal life, mentioned in this passage; and the efficacy of death to make him miserable, hereafter, will be finally taken away.

Having thus endeavoured to settle the meaning of the text, I shall now proceed to a consideration of the principal doctrine which it contains; viz. *That Christ has, in the Gospel, clearly and strongly exhibited to mankind a future immortal life.* This doctrine I propose to illustrate by a series of observations, under the three following heads:

I. *Immortal life was unknown to mankind by the investigations of Reason.*

II. *It was imperfectly revealed in the Jewish Scriptures.*

III. *It is completely revealed, proved, and explained, by Christ in the Gospel.*

I. *Immortal life was unknown to mankind by the investigations of Reason.*

To exhibit my own views concerning what is intended in this declaration, I observe,

1. *That in most countries the common people have believed the soul to be immortal, and to be rewarded, or punished, beyond the grave.*

It is unnecessary, and indeed impossible, for me to recite, here, the various opinions of mankind concerning this subject. Few persons can be ignorant, that the assertion is generally true: few, I mean, who have read to any extent. We can hardly take up a history of any nation, without finding this doctrine a part of their creed. The Savages of *America, Asia, and Africa*, have held it with as much confidence, and, I may add, with as much rationality, as the nations who were more enlightened.

In a few countries it seems to have faded out of the belief, as it

has gradually been lost out of the knowledge, of the inhabitants : I mean, that they ceased to believe a future state of existence, because they ceased to know, that there was any such doctrine. This is probably true of the *Caffres*, bordering on the country of the *Hottentots* ; of the people who inhabit *New Holland* ; and perhaps of some other nations. In all these cases the Doctrine seems to have been lost, through a general, and extreme, ignorance and degradation. Wherever the doctrine has been known, it seems regularly to have been admitted by the people at large.

2. *It has also been admitted by some Philosophers.*

Among these may be enumerated, not, however, without some uncertainty respecting several of them, and not without some qualifications of their opinions, *Pherecydes*, *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Cicero*, and *Plutarch* ; together with some others. Several, also, of the Oriental philosophers held the same doctrine ; and it seems to have been admitted by some whole sects, or perhaps more properly, by a considerable number of individuals, who belonged to these sects.

3. *These Philosophers held very defective, and very erroneous, opinions concerning this doctrine.*

Pythagoras, it is universally known, held the doctrine of *transmigration* : i. e. he supposed, that the soul, when it left one body, passed into another ; and, indifferently, into the body of a man, or of a brute. This opinion, according to *Diodorus Siculus*, he derived from the *Egyptians* ; who held, that the soul, after leaving the body, passed successively through the body of one animal after another, in a circuit, occupying three thousand years : and then entered again into a human body. When this transmigration was ended, *Pythagoras* taught, that the soul became reunited to the Deity, or *Universal Soul* ; of whom he supposed it to be originally a part ; having been only separated, or lopped off ; retaining, through all its various modes of existence, its primeval nature ; and being, therefore, necessarily immortal. At the same time he held, and, to be consistent with himself, must have held, that all animals have a near kindred to man, and are of a similar kind.

Socrates says, a little before his death. " I hope I am now going

to good men ; though this I would not take upon me peremptorily to assert. But I would certainly affirm, if I could affirm any thing of this nature, That I shall go to the gods. I am in good hope, that there is something remaining for those, that are dead ; and, as it has been said in ancient times, That good men will then fare better than bad ones." Such men, as had diligently studied wisdom and philosophy, Socrates believed, would go to the gods, and live with them through their remaining existence. Of other men, who were not philosophers, but who were just, temperate, and useful, he taught, " That their souls would go, either into other human bodies, or into the bodies of such animals, as were mild, and social ; ants, for example, and bees ; who maintain a species of order and government." The rest of mankind, he supposed, would re-animate the bodies of grosser animals, whose nature was suited to their own.

Plato held, in substance, the doctrines of his master. He seems, however, to have adopted the opinion, that rewards would, hereafter, probably be distributed to the good and punishments to the evil. He also held, with *Pythagoras*, that the soul was a part of the Divinity, and would be re-united with it hereafter.

Cicero held the doctrine of a future existence ; and frequently laboured to defend it. At times, however, he expresses himself doubtfully on the subject ; and at others, directly asserts the contrary doctrine.

The same inconsistency is predicable of *Epictetus*.

4. *The Philosophers supported their doctrines on this subject with arguments, which were unsatisfactory even to themselves.*

This *Socrates* and *Cicero* directly declare.

Cicero says ; and it will be admitted that he was acquainted with all the arguments, which others had advanced concerning this doctrine ; That, while he is contemplating the subject, and examining the arguments, he feels satisfied, that the doctrine is true ; but, that, when he turns his thoughts away, the whole appears to be a dream.

Socrates expressly styles his view of it *A hope* ; and says expressly, that he will not take upon him peremptorily to assert it. It is also evident, that both he, and *Plato*, very plainly rested for

much of the belief, which they had, on the declarations of the Ancients, which had come down to them by tradition.

It is hardly necessary to observe, that no arguments can be produced, except such as are ridiculous, in favour of the scheme of transmigration, which was an essential part of the future existence taught by *Pythagoras*, and borrowed by him, most probably, from the *Brahminic* philosophy.

These imperfect arguments were also greatly weakened by the doubts, which the authors of them frequently expressed; by the very various opinions concerning the subject which they entertained; and by the contradictory opinions and arguments of other philosophers. From these and other causes, their arguments had so little influence with their countrymen, that they scarcely made any converts to their own peculiar doctrines.

5. *Many sects of Philosophers denied a future existence altogether.*

Aristotle says expressly, That "death is the most dreadful of all things, because it is the end of our being; and that the dead experience neither good, nor evil." Many of his followers held the same doctrine; and one of them, *Dicæarchus*, wrote a book to prove that the soul is mortal.

The *Stoics* seem generally to have held, that the soul survived the body, but only for a limited period; those of ignorant men, for a little time; and those of the wise, to the general conflagration.

Democritus and *Epicurus* wholly denied a future existence; as did also their followers.

The *Pyrrhonists* and *New Academics*, acknowledged nothing as certain; not even self-evident propositions.

Confucius the celebrated *Chinese* philosopher, did not admit a future state; nor does such a state appear to have been believed by any of his followers.

This extensive denial of a future existence among so many of their learned men; the clashing opinions of those, who admitted such an existence; and the clashing arguments, by which they severally supported their own doctrines; produced, as we should naturally expect, very unfavourable effects upon the minds of the people at large. In this manner the *Athenians*, *Romans*, and *Chinese*,

all of whom, like the rest of mankind, appear to have believed a future existence, came, in the end, generally to disbelieve it.

The whole real influence of philosophy seems to have been, therefore, to weaken, not to establish, this doctrine. Hence,

6. *The reception of the doctrine, so far as it extended, was, in all probability, derived from Tradition, and not from Philosophy.*

Among the common people, a future existence, and that immortal, has been very generally admitted throughout the world; and apparently without a single doubt. It will not be believed, that men of this description derived their opinions from philosophy. Besides, this doctrine has been received in innumerable countries, which philosophy never reached; and in ages, long before the existence of the most ancient sect of Philosophers. We have also seen, that wherever philosophy prevailed, its decisions had a very unfavourable influence on the belief of a future state, and, to a great extent, exterminated it in *China, Greece, and Rome*. The philosophy of most sects induced them to deny it: that of others led them to receive it, only with uncertainty and doubt.

Pherecydes, the master of *Pythagoras*, the first among the *Greeks*, who wrote of nature and the gods, is expressly said, by *Suidas*, to have exercised himself in the hidden books of the *Phœnicians*, and to have derived from them his wisdom and Theology.

It is to be remembered, that both *Xenophon* and *Herodotus* called the *Jews Syrians*, and *Phœnicians*.

Jamblicus, in his life of *Pythagoras*, informs us, that that philosopher made a voyage to *Sidon*, where he conferred with the prophets, who were successors of *Moschus*, i. e. *Moses*, the physiologist.

Porphyry declares, that *Pythagoras* went to the *Arabians*, *Hebrews*, and *Chaldeans*.

Jamblicus says, that he was in *Judea*, and dwelt in *Mount Carmel*.

Strabo declares the same thing; and says, that a priest showed him the walks of this philosopher.

Diogenes Laertius also testifies, that he visited the *Hebrews*.

Clemens Alexandrinus asserts, that he suffered himself to be circumcised, that he might receive instructions, which he could not otherwise obtain.

Finally, both *Clemens Alexandrinus* and *Porphyry* testify, that he derived the most excellent parts of his philosophy from *Barbarians*; i. e. from nations, who were not *Greeks*.

Socrates, as I have already observed, declared, just before his death, that he had good hope of something remaining for those that are dead; and that, *as it had been said of old*, the good would fare much better than the bad. Again, in his Apology to his Judges he says, "There is much ground to hope, that death is profitable, and that it is only a migration of the soul to another place, according to what we are told." And again, "If the things, that are told us, are true, that death is a migration to another place, this is a much greater good." And again, "Those who live there are happier than we, and are immortal, if the things, which are told us, are true." From these declarations it is, I think, certain, that *Socrates*, notwithstanding his arguments, relied ultimately on tradition, and not on Philosophy, to support his doctrine of the soul's immortality.

Plato says, in his *Philebus*, "The tradition, which I have had concerning the unity of God, his essence, perfections, and decrees, was from the ancients, who were better than the *Greeks*." This Philosopher, according to the testimony of *Diogenes Laertius*, and *Quintilian*, went into *Egypt*. *Cicero* says the same. *Strabo* says, he continued there thirteen years. *Cicero* says, that the purpose of his journey to *Egypt* was, to acquaint himself with the celestial speculations of the *Barbarians*; and *St. Ambrose*, "to inform himself concerning the things done, and written, by *Moses*, the oracles of the law, and the sayings of the prophets." *Justin Martyr* declares, that "he drew many things from the *Hebrew rivulets*; and that whatsoever he said devoutly of God, or his worship, he stole out of the *Hebrew philosophy*." *Clemens Alexandrinus* calls him a Philosopher of the *Hebrews*; and *Nume-nius*, a *Pythagorean* philosopher, asks, "What is *Plato*, but *Moses* speaking *Greek*?" Finally, *St. Augustine* says, that he learned the *Hebrew* language while he was in *Egypt*.

According to *Pausanias*, he derived his doctrine of the immortality of the soul from the wise men of *Sais*. He himself says, "The surest way to prove the immortality of the soul is by some divine word."

From all these facts it is, if I mistake not, unanswerably evident, that these Philosophers were entirely indebted to traditional information for all the knowledge, which they possessed, concerning the immortality of the soul. Accordingly, this doctrine was embraced generally by such among them, as endeavoured to collect the traditions of the countries around them : while it was uniformly, or almost uniformly denied by those, who derived their opinions from their own reason.

7. *The immortality, which was actually believed, was in most respects merely fanciful, and incapable of being received in the exercise of sober thought.*

The general doctrine, concerning a future existence, was this : That it was a life much resembling the present, where similar pursuits were to be followed, and the same enjoyments repeated. Thus, the *Aborigines* of this country expected, in *their* future happy world, to inhabit a pleasant region, where game abounded, and might be easily taken ; where they were to be safe from enemies, to find food plentifully supplied, and to spend their time in ease and sports.

The *Greeks*, and *Romans*, had generally the same views ; communicated, indeed, with more skill and elegance, but formed, substantially, of the same materials. Their future existence was also to be passed in eating and drinking, wrestling, horse and chariot races, singing, playing upon the harp, and other pursuits of a similar kind. In all this, it will be readily admitted, there is nothing, worthy of the proper dignity of a rational being ; nothing, which can excite a single momentary wish in the mind of a wise and good man, that his being may be protracted after death. It must, however, be acknowledged, that both *Socrates* and *Plato* formed conceptions on this subject, of a nature plainly superior to these. *Socrates* speaks of the soul, which gives itself up to wisdom and philosophy, “as going, at death, to that, which is like itself ; wise, divine, and immortal ; where it shall be happy ; delivered from error, ignorance, fear, wild desires, and other evils incident to man ; and live, during the remainder of its existence, with the gods.” He also says, that “those who are virtuous, and are purged by philosophy, ascend to beautiful habitations, in a purer region above the earth.” *Plato* also says, that “the enjoy-

ments, which reward good men in this life, are nothing, either in number or degree, to those, that remain for them after death." I have already remarked, that these and some other Philosophers derived their knowledge of the doctrine itself from tradition. It will easily be believed, that those, who communicated the traditions to them, disclosed also, and of course, these general appendages: for it is hardly possible, that one man should receive from another information of so much importance, as that concerning a future state of existence, and not inquire what kind of a state it was to be; or, that the communication itself should be made, without involving some of those circumstances, which would especially constitute its importance.

Should this reasonable supposition be questioned; it must be admitted by an objector, that, in these two instances, the human mind has risen above its usual level; and from other information which it had previously received, has struck out several sublime truths, of which we find scarcely a hint in the opinions of any other man.

8. *At the present time, such a state, independently of Revelation, is felt to be uncertain.*

Revelation not only asserts the future existence of immortal life, but explains also its nature, propriety, and importance, in a manner remarkably clear, and wonderfully sublime. Enlightened by these communications, the Reason of man comprehends this subject with views, in many respects totally new, and far more satisfactory than those, which could be formed by a heathen. The very fact, that we have learned from Revelation the nature of virtue; its worth in the sight of God; the capacity of the soul for endless improvement; the existence of means, by which it may thus improve; and the nature of those rewards, to which it is destined: furnishes us with incomparably more just and expanded apprehensions concerning a future state of being, its propriety and probability, than we could otherwise acquire. What is still more to the purpose, we have learned also from Revelation the true character of God; and perceive, that his power, wisdom, and goodness, are unlimited. We perceive, that he has formed the Universe to be an immense kingdom of virtue and happiness; and are convinced, that, in the prosecution of this design, nothing

is too great or too good for him to do. With these views of the character and designs of God, we much more readily admit the existence of such a state, than any heathen can be supposed to have done. Such gods as his were, contained, in their character, no decisive principles, on which he could build any assurance of a revival beyond the grave; or any such circumstances of that existence, as might render it plainly desirable. Of virtue, also, his conceptions were indefinite and lame. Still more imperfect must have been his apprehensions concerning the manner in which such virtue, as was within his knowledge, must be regarded by his gods; and of the nature and extent of those rewards, with which it would be retributed hereafter.

In the mean time, the modern astronomy has expanded and ennobled all human conceptions of the Universe itself. With our apprehensions concerning its extent, and greatness, and importance, our conceptions concerning the dignity, and destiny, of its inhabitants have become more rational and exalted; and we are prepared much more readily to admit, that they may be designed for immortal existence.

I will only add, that the question concerning this interesting subject has been so often discussed, that the arguments are all arranged, and in a sense learned by heart, by every student of metaphysical science. Little pains, therefore, are necessary to summon them all up to view; and to see and feel their whole import.

But with all these advantages, the doctrine of a future being, as soon as we forsake the dictates of Revelation, is even now questioned, doubted, and denied. Almost every Infidel questions it; by a great proportion of them it is doubted; by many of them it is denied. It is incredible, that this should be the fact, if any arguments furnished by Reason, clearly established the point in debate. Infidels certainly would very readily admit, both the point, and the arguments: For then they would be able to meet, much more successfully, those reasons, which have hitherto unanswerably proved the necessity of Revelation.

The arguments, suggested by reason on this subject, are derived from *the general state of providence, the nature of man, and the attributes of God*. All these, I apprehend, are doubtful sources of proof on this subject.

The general state of Providence is imperfectly known by *us*. Without Revelation, it seems impossible to determine what are the ends, to which the divine government in this world is directed. For ought that we can tell, these ends may be such as are completely answered here. It will be difficult to show, that man was not created for purposes, which may be sufficiently useful to the universe, and yet be accomplished here. Other beings wiser and better than we, who, for ought that appears, may extensively be witnesses of our conduct, may learn from us such important lessons of instruction and admonition, as may amply vindicate the wisdom of God in our creation; although we should exist, only during the present life. How extensive, how enduring, and how beneficial, the instructions may be to beings of a superior and virtuous character, which may be derived from beholding the endlessly diversified follies and crimes of men, we cannot comprehend. For ought that appears, they may be effectual means of retaining such beings in their allegiance, virtue, and happiness, forever. Nor are we in this case without the aid of analogy. Inferior creatures appear to be formed for *our* use: there is no proof that *we* were not created for the use of other beings, superior to ourselves.

The nature, and faculties, of man are commonly urged as evidence of a future state. But conclusions from this source, also, appear to be doubtful. The soul of man must, I think, be an uncompounded substance; and may have no tendency towards extinction. But its continuance must evidently, and certainly, depend upon the will of God; and what that will is, reason cannot divine.

The soul is also intelligent; and is capable of knowing, loving, and enjoying, God. But man, certainly, is not naturally disposed to do, and, independently of Revelation, has not done, either. For what reason, then, can God be supposed to prolong his existence in another state, unless to punish him. Should it be said, that there are some men, to whom these observations are not applicable; I answer, the best of men are sinners. There is no moral truth, more indubitable than this. But sinners, whether partially or wholly sinful, must be odious in the sight of their Creator; and neither merit any thing, unless punishment. from

his hands, nor can be of any value to him. No exception to the general conclusion is, therefore, necessary on their account.

We are extremely prone to feel, that the race of man is too important, and valuable, to be yielded up to annihilation. But we know, although the heathen did not, and perhaps could not know, that, *before God, all nations are as nothing, and are counted unto him as less than nothing, and vanity.* Mankind, considered as capable of being virtuous, useful, and immortal, are capable of an importance and worth which no finite mind can comprehend. But they are evidently not disposed to be either virtuous or useful; and are, therefore, so far from being valuable in the sight of their Maker, that they are only *abominable and filthy*; hostile to his designs, and nuisances to his kingdom. Of what consequence can such creatures as we are be to Him, who *is able of the stones to raise up children unto Abraham*; and who, if we were blotted out of existence, could, with a word, call into existence an equal number of Angels to fill our places?

From *the attributes of God* no conclusions can be derived to this point, which will be attended with either certainty, or satisfaction. It is said, indeed, that God is infinitely good; and cannot be supposed, therefore, to annihilate his rational creatures. All that we know of the attributes of God, independently of Revelation, is derived ultimately from experience. In our experience, and in that of all men, we find no proofs of such goodness, as can furnish us with any hope of his future favour to beings of a sinful character. Look at the judgments, with which He has ever visited this guilty world. Look at the ravages of the pestilence and the famine, the tempest, the earthquake, and the volcano! Mark the desolations of war, and the miseries spread through the world by the rod of oppression! Consider the sorrows entailed upon mankind by toil, want, and disease! Behold death reigning with a boundless empire, and an absolute sway, over all the race of Adam! Go to the cradle; and see the infant, that has just opened its eyes upon the sun, close them again in agonies forever! See half of all, who are born, go, before they have completed five years of age, to the tomb! Tell me now whether He, who does these things, can be supposed to regard mankind with favour, when their earthly trial is terminated; and whether we

are not compelled to expect as our future lot, either annihilation, or such sufferings as will suitably reward our rebellion against our Maker.

But could we from sources hitherto unexplored, or by arguments hitherto unknown, prove, that we should exist hereafter, and that we should not be in the proper sense miserable; we should be equally at a loss for arguments to evince, or reasons even to hope for, the immortal life of the Scriptures. This is a glorious and divine immortality, formed of knowledge and virtue, of enjoyment and usefulness, which admit neither interruption nor limit; an immortality, suited to the exalted nature of Angels, and to the benevolence of JEHOVAH. At such an immortality Reason never glanced her eye. Of such an immortality Hope never dreamed, even in her most ecstatic visions. The heathen promised themselves all the future good, upon which Reason, in her fondest indulgence of hope, could ever count; and an *Arabian* waste is less unlike to Paradise, than their *Elysium* to heaven.

II. *The doctrine of immortal life was imperfectly revealed in the Jewish Scriptures.*

Concerning this position I observe,

1. *The doctrine was actually revealed in the Scriptures.*

It was revealed in a variety of doctrinal declarations. For example: When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a burning bush, he said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." This passage, you know, our Saviour alleges, and with unanswerable force, as proof of the separate existence of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, and by consequence, of others also, after death. God, we all clearly perceive, is not the God of the dead; i. e. as the word is here used, of beings who have ceased to exist; but of beings who are conscious, and of course living. Job also says, "Oh that my words were now written! Oh, that they were printed in a book; that they were graven with an iron pen, and lead, in the rock forever!" viz. or namely, as *Horseley* informs us the particle, which is rendered for, ought to be translated; "I know, that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and, after I shall awake, though this body be destroyed yet out of my flesh shall I see God." "Whom I shall see for myself; and mine eyes

shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." These remarkable words, which Job so naturally, and earnestly, wished to have printed in a book, and graven with an iron pen in a rock forever, are an extraordinary disclosure of a future, happy existence. Of the same nature are those declarations of the Psalmist: "I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: My flesh, also, shall rest in hope: For thou wilt not leave my soul in Scheol. Thou wilt shew me the path of life. In thy presence is fulness of joy; and at thy right hand are pleasures forevermore." And again: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." It is unnecessary to multiply quotations of this nature any farther. These passages are, perhaps, the most explicit of those, which are occupied by this subject.

The same doctrine is also taught, in the Old Testament, by facts. Of *Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Aaron, and Moses*, it is said, that *they were gathered unto their people*. This phrase has been frequently, perhaps commonly, supposed to mean, that the persons spoken of were buried with their kindred, or ancestors. The supposition, however, is plainly erroneous. Neither *Abraham, Ishmael, Aaron*, nor *Moses*, were buried with any of their kindred. *Isaac and Jacob* were buried with *Abraham*. But it would be unintelligible language to say, that they were buried with *their people*. The word *gathered*, in these passages, denotes *being conveyed to the assembly of the blessed*. In this manner it is used *Job*, xxvii. 19, "The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered;" in Psalm xxvi. 9, "Gather not my soul with sinners;" and probably in several other places. Of these persons, then, it is directly declared, that God conveyed them, after death, to the assembly of the blessed.

Of *Enoch and Elijah* it is also declared, that they did not die, but were translated, while living, to another and better world.

2. *The doctrine of immortal life is, nevertheless, disclosed imperfectly, even in these passages.*

We, who are in full possession of the New Testament, look at the Old with eyes very different from those, by which it was seen

by the *Jews*. Enlightened concerning this subject by the very numerous and explicit declarations of the Evangelical writers, we understand many passages, probably most, much more clearly than the *Jews* could understand them. A *Jew*, reading the passage quoted by our Saviour from the third chapter of *Exodus*, as a decisive proof of a future state, might, neither unnaturally, nor improbably, have supposed it to mean thus: "I am the God, who revealed himself to *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and who, while they were living in this world, blessed them with many and extraordinary blessings." In a manner not very dissimilar, might glosses be put upon the other passages which I have quoted in immediate connection with this, of such a nature as to render the meaning, which seems to us so clear, much less obvious and certain, than it now seems, and in the end doubtful and undecisive. Perhaps few of us would have thought this doctrine alleged by Christ, in the passage quoted, had we not found it thus explained by this divine Commentator.

Of the declarations concerning *Enoch* and *Elijah* it might be said, not unnaturally, that the manner of their exit from this world was a dispensation granted to them, as a peculiar favour, on account of their pre-eminent piety. It might, therefore, be easily concluded, that, although they existed in a future state of being, other men, who were consigned to the grave and became the prey of worms and corruption, would not be admitted to the same existence.

Probably the *Sadducees* and their followers, who constituted a considerable part of the *Jewish* nation, and were often men of high distinction for their understanding, construed these and other similar passages of the Old Testament, in a manner not very unlike that which I have suggested. However this may have been, we know, that all *these Jews*, although universally acknowledging the Scriptures of the Old Testament to be the Word of God, absolutely denied, that they contained any evidence of a future state. It must undoubtedly be conceded, that such a fact would have been impossible, had the doctrine of immortal life been clearly contained in this part of divine Revelation.

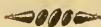
On the same grounds the celebrated Doctor *Warburton* has

supposed, and laboriously endeavoured to prove, that the doctrine of a future state is not contained in the Old Testament. Had the revelation of this doctrine been as explicit in the *Jewish*, as in the Christian Scriptures, it is unnecessary to say, this learned divine would never have even thought of such an opinion.

From these facts it must undoubtedly be conceded, that the disclosures concerning the future existence of mankind, made in the Old Testament, were so far obscure and imperfect, as abundantly to vindicate the declaration of the text.

SERMON X.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY BROUGHT TO LIGHT BY
THE GOSPEL. SERMON II.



1 TIMOTHY i. 10.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

FROM this passage of Scripture, after having endeavoured to settle the meaning of its terms, I asserted the following Doctrine:

That Christ has, through the Gospel, clearly, and strongly, exhibited to mankind, in a manner unknown before, a future, immortal Life.

This Doctrine I proposed to illustrate by a series of observations, under these three heads:

I. *Immortal life was unknown to mankind by the investigations of Reason.*

II. *It was imperfectly revealed in the Jewish Scriptures.*

III. *It is completely revealed, proved, and explained, by Christ, in the Gospel.*

Under the first of these heads I observed,

1. *That in most countries the common people have believed the soul to be immortal; and to be rewarded, or punished, beyond the grave.*

2. *That this doctrine has also been admitted by some Philosophers.*

3. *That these Philosophers held very defective and very erroneous opinions, concerning this Doctrine.*

Under this head I particularly recited the opinions of *Pythagoras, Plato, Socrates, and Cicero.*

4. *That these Philosophers supported their opinions on this subject, with arguments, which were unsatisfactory even to themselves.*

5. *That many sects of Philosophers denied a future existence altogether.*

Of these I mentioned *Aristotle*, and many of his followers; the *Stoics*, *Democritus*, and *Epicurus*, and their followers; the *Pyrrhonists*; the *New Academics*; *Confucius* the Chinese Philosopher, and his followers.

6. *That the reception of the Doctrine, so far as it extended, was, in all probability, derived from tradition, and not from Philosophy.*

7. *That the immortality, which was actually believed, was, in most respects, merely fanciful, and incapable of being received in the exercise of sober thought.*

8. *That at the present time such a state, independently of Revelation, is felt to be uncertain.*

Under the second general head, viz. *That the Doctrine of immortal life was imperfectly revealed in the Jewish Scriptures*, I observed,

1st. *That this Doctrine was actually revealed in these Scriptures.*

In support of this assertion I quoted several passages from the Old Testament, in which I supposed it to be as decisively, and probably more decisively, exhibited, than in any other. Yet I observed,

2dly. And endeavoured to prove, *that, even in these passages, it is imperfectly disclosed.*

I will now proceed to the consideration of the third general head of discourse, proposed at that time; viz. *That immortal life is completely revealed, proved, and explained, by Christ, in the Gospel.*

On this subject I observe,

1. *This Doctrine is declared, without any obscurity, in a multitude of passages, which cannot be denied, misinterpreted, nor misunderstood.*

In the former part of this discourse I considered, summarily, the principal sources of argumentation on this subject, which have been discovered by reason; and, if I mistake not, showed that they can give rise to none but doubtful conclusions. This, plainly, has been the decision of all classes of men; as well of those

who have believed, as of those who have denied, the Doctrine. Among the heathen Philosophers, *Socrates*, *Plato*, and *Cicero*, may be fairly mentioned, as having reached the highest point of discovery ever gained by the ancient Philosophy; and these three great men have clearly pronounced their arguments to be uncertain. The two former obviously placed more reliance on the traditional accounts, from which they derived their knowledge of the Doctrine, than upon their own arguments.

With respect to modern times it is unquestionably true, that almost all thinking men have regarded arguments derived from these sources, as amounting to no more, at the best, than probable evidence. Among Deists, Lord *Herbert of Cherbury*, may perhaps have been an exception. This nobleman announces to us the Doctrine of future rewards and punishments, as *an innate principle of the human mind*; and ought, therefore, to be considered as believing it to be certain. In this, so far as my knowledge extends, he is alone, among those who have denied the Revelation of the Scriptures.

Among Christians, I know of but one,* who has regarded the immortality of the soul as susceptible of demonstration. Should we believe with this ingenious writer, that the soul, metaphysically considered, is so formed, as naturally to be immortal; we must still acknowledge, because it cannot be denied, that its existence may terminate at death, or at any other supposable period. Whatever has been created can certainly be annihilated by the power, which created it. The continuance of the soul must, therefore, depend absolutely on the Will of God. But that will can never be known by creatures, unless he is pleased to disclose it. Without Revelation, therefore, the immortality of the soul must be entirely uncertain.

Of a totally different nature from all these things is the evidence of the Doctrine, furnished by Scriptural declarations. They are declarations of the will of God concerning our future destiny, made by himself; the Being, who certainly knows what he has determined, and has here communicated his determination.

The Gospel, which contains these declarations, unfolds also, in

the most perfect manner, His character ; and teaches us, irresistibly, that He is able to accomplish all things which he pleases ; that He has formed the soul for immortality ; has promised to invest it with immortal life ; and is unchangeably faithful to execute all his promises. The Gospel teaches us, also, that Christ, who has made, mediately or immediately, all these declarations, knows the will and designs of God ; *is in the bosom of the Father* ; came to our world for the purpose of bringing life and immortality to light ; evinced in an unanswerable manner the divinity of his mission ; and, therefore, has certainly told us the truth.

That these declarations are too explicit to be denied or mistaken, will not be questioned. Should a single doubt concerning their import exist in any person, let him read, even with moderate attention, the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the *Corinthians* ; and it will exist no more.

2dly. *The Nature of the immortal life, which is announced, is also abundantly disclosed.*

This is a subject, about which Reason can form no conclusions, except such as are merely conjectural. That God is merciful may, I apprehend, be determined, at least by minds enlightened by Revelation, with evidence which is sufficient, and which, yet, is not derived from the Scriptures. But no arguments, beside those which are found in the Scriptures, will prove that his mercy can be extended to such beings as ourselves. The only facts, which seem to give even a hope that the Divine favour may hereafter be extended to any of our race, are these : Mankind are continued in the world ; and many blessings are regularly furnished to them. These are, not unnaturally, indications, that God has not finally cast off the whole family of *Adam*. Yet Reason cannot possibly determine whether any human being will be happy in a future world. If this great point were decided, I ask, when will that happiness commence ? Where will it be found ? In what degree will it be enjoyed ? Will it be mixed, or unmixed ? How long will it continue ? On whom will it be bestowed ? To these questions, Revelation apart, no child of *Adam* can return an answer. To the world where that happiness is found, no inhabitant of earth has ever gone. From that world no being has visited this melancholy region of sin and sorrow. Tidings, concerning

the persons who dwell, and the things which are done or enjoyed, in that supposed Paradise, have never been rehearsed below the sun.

But Christ has answered all these momentous inquiries. He came from the real world, where happiness dwells forever. He has announced *the glad tidings of great joy*, that every repenting, returning child of *Adam* shall hereafter be happy. He has told us, that the time, at which it will commence, is that of our departure. The place is Heaven; the degree, unlimited; the nature, perfect; and the duration, endless.

With the same precision are we taught the manner, in which the happiness will be enjoyed. The *spirit of every just man* will, we are informed, be *made perfect*. His sins and follies, the garb of rags and shame which he wore, while a wanderer here, will be stripped off and left behind, when he commences his journey to his Father's house. All his worldly affections, all his earthly views, will be buried in the grave. The soul, escaping from its prison and bursting its chains, will enter eternity, possessed of the glorious liberty of the sons of God; and will stretch its wings for a vigorous flight to the celestial Paradise. Here it will be found to have been a humble, faithful follower of the Lamb; to have been washed in his blood; to have been renewed by his Spirit; and to have been *faithful over the few things*, entrusted to it here below. It will therefore be pronounced to have *well done*; and directed to *enter into the joy of its Lord*. Henceforth it will be completely sanctified; adorned with divine beauty and loveliness; and instamped with the perfect image of God.

Equally pure, equally unmingled with error, will be its knowledge. "Now," saith *St Paul*, "I know in part; but then shall I know, even as I also am known. Now, I know in part; but, when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I reasoned as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. Now, I see through a glass, darkly; but then, face to face." The state of the soul, at its arrival in heaven, is no longer a state of infancy, in which its inquiries are lisped to others; *their* answers are half understood, and doubtfully received; and *its own* reasonings concerning them are lame, partial, and unsatisfactory. It is a vigorous manhood, in which its

conceptions are strong and intuitive ; its communications instantaneous and exact exhibitions of its thoughts ; and its reasonings, whenever it finds occasion to reason, direct and decisive. The objects of its knowledge will be, here, equally extended with the universe ; numerous and diversified, as the parts of which it is composed, and the beings by whom it is inhabited ; and sublime and vast as the Providence by which it is controlled. At the same time, the scheme of benevolence, begun with the Creation by its glorious Author, and pursued through an endless succession of dispensations, will be so exactly unfolded, and their perfect nature and divine consequences will be so distinctly understood ; that all these objects of contemplation will be only delightful.

In its powers also, its capacity, and its energy, the mind will be *ισαγγελος* ; *like an Angel*. Instead of decaying ; instead of being wearied ; instead of being limited by a goal beyond which they cannot advance ; these powers will be enlarged and invigorated forever. With such powers to investigate, with such objects to be investigated ; with such ample means, and such efficacious motives, for investigation ; what mind, less than Omniscient, can comprehend either its progress or its attainments ?

At the same time, also, the End, the genuine effect, of all these endowments and acquisitions, will be, the improvement of its beneficence, and of its piety. The end of all thought is action. The real worth of all virtue lies in being the voluntary cause of good. Here, the real beauty, the genuine worth, of this glorious principle will be completely manifested. To God the soul will instinctively turn, as the needle to the pole, under the magnetic influence of that love, which is the bond of perfection ; and, day and night, yield its reverential and rapturous tribute of homage to the Author of all its mercies. The silent hymn of gratitude and complacency will be wafted, without intermission, to the throne of heaven, from a heart, whose intelligence and affections are, here, first wrought into a divine and perpetual harmony. In endless succession, also, will it unite all its powers in the social Anthem of heaven, " Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever ;" accompanied by every harp, and every voice, in that delightful world : while, at each successive pause, *the four and twenty*

Elders fall down, and worship Him, that liveth forever and ever; and the four Living creatures, who are round about the throne, pronounce their solemn Amen.

The same divine principle, the same perfect energy of the soul, will operate, with undecaying pleasure, in an immortal course of beneficence to its companions, the general Assembly of the First-born, and the innumerable company of Angels. All these will be mutually and intensely endeared, as children of the one God; servants of the one Redeemer; the divine workmanship of the one Spirit of Truth; inhabitants of one house; members of one family; engaged in the same glorious pursuits; and destined to the same eternal enjoyments. Among all these not one sinner will be found; not a solitary cause of regret, not a single source of pain, anxiety, or fear. The face of heaven is spotted by no stain; its sunshine intercepted by no cloud. Wherever the eye looks, it sees a child of God; adorned with his image, and informed with his excellence; beautiful and lovely in *His* sight, and delightful in its own. All the denizens of that world are friends; all their intercourse is the pure friendship of the Gospel; intense benevolence, and unlimited beneficence, reciprocated and enjoyed, through ages which know no end.

To the soul thus approved, sanctified, enlightened, will be reunited, after the Resurrection, a *body* raised in incorruption, power, and glory, and fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ; spiritual in its nature, attributes, and endurance; and thus fitted to become the residence of a perfect mind, and the means of enlarging its knowledge, virtue, and enjoyment.

To complete this system of good, we are taught, that *of its increase there will be no end*. The individuals which compose it, and the whole which they compose, bright, and good, and glorious, and happy, at first, will be brighter and better, more glorious and more happy, throughout endless ages.

Such, summarily, is the immortal life, disclosed in the Gospel. I shall not attempt to form a comparison betwixt this scheme, and that of the ancient heathen. The distance is too vast; the labour too discouraging. As well might a comparison be formed between earth and heaven, or between our momentary life and the immense of duration.

3dly. *Christ has disclosed this Doctrine in three methods.*

First. *He taught it directly with his voice.*

The declarations which he has given us, to this purpose, are multiplied, express, and unquestionable. See, for example, the parable of the rich man and *Lazarus*, and that of the prodigal son; the thirteenth and twenty-fifth chapters of *Matthew*; the fifth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth, of *John*; together with a great variety of other passages dispersed every where throughout the Evangelical History.

To feel the full import of these declarations, we must remember, that Christ came from the very world where immortal life is found, and had dwelt there from the beginning. All things, which were done in that happy region, he perfectly knew; and all which ever will be done. Nay, he is the very person who will communicate these blessings; and in these declarations, therefore, only announces to us what he himself will do.

Secondly. *Christ has disclosed this Doctrine by his own death and resurrection.*

Here, the facts, which it involves, actually took place.

Christ lived in this world a frail, dying man, like ourselves. At the close of his life he actually suffered death; as was abundantly proved by the blood and water, which flowed from the wound, made in his side by the spear of the *Roman* soldier. He actually gave up the ghost; was buried; and was gone. But, having of his own accord *laid down his life, he took it up again*; arose from the dead; and ascended to heaven.

By these stupendous events mankind are taught,

First. *That there is a resurrection from the dead.*

Secondly. *That it is a resurrection to immortal life; a state of endless glory and happiness.*

Thirdly. *That those, who are thus raised ascend to heaven.*

Fourthly. *That he is able to accomplish such a resurrection for us.*

Christ was actually raised to immortal life, glory, and happiness; ascended to heaven with a glorified body, and a mind, finally freed from those infirmities, which as our High Priest he was pleased to assume. All this he accomplished for himself; and is, therefore, able to raise us to the same life, happiness, and glory, with bodies, and minds, resembling his own.

All this, also, he has proved that he will do. He became incarnate, lived, and died, for us; and has thus evinced, beyond debate, that he will do every thing else, which is desirable. No future labour, no self-denial, can equal what he has already undergone. His determination, therefore, and his faithfulness, are here written in sun-beams.

The evidence thus presented to us, is of the happiest and most convincing kind conceivable. It can be understood by all men, whether ignorant or learned; and cannot but be felt and realized. The conviction, effectuated by reason, is ordinarily liable to much misunderstanding and uncertainty; and has little influence, especially on the ignorant and the wicked. Accordingly, no reasonings on this subject appear to have produced any moral effects on the minds of mankind.

All the evidence, communicated to us in these two methods, has been conveyed down by the Gospel; and has been attended by such a multitude and variety of proofs, as have been completely satisfactory to wise and good men, wherever they have been known. The more they have been objected to, the more firmly they have been established; because they have been more diligently examined, and more thoroughly understood.

Thirdly. *Christ, in the Gospel, has also taught us this Doctrine, in a manner different from both these. He has exhibited all the Parts, and Reasons; the propriety, excellence, sublimity, and dignity; of this scheme of immortal life.*

In this exhibition we are presented with a new, wonderful, and harmonious scheme of moral truth; in which all the parts are suited to each other; and are the proper constituents of a magnificent and glorious system, disclosing with unrivalled splendour the wisdom and goodness of God. Here, the reasons, on which this mighty dispensation is founded; the manner, in which immortal life is bestowed; and the harmony of those parts, out of which the scheme is formed; present to the mind of a thinking man evidence of the same general nature with that, which is furnished by the fitness and agreement of all the parts in a well conducted narrative; the invention of which is fairly pronounced to be beyond the power of imposture. At the same time the mind is delivered, to a great extent, from the perplexity which natu-

rally springs from the mysterious and inexplicable nature of the subject, as surveyed by Reason. The Gospel discloses to us the great truth, that God can forgive sin ; and the grounds, on which, even *we* discern, it may with propriety be forgiven. It shows us, that such guilty beings as we are may be sanctified ; may become real penitents ; and may resume that confidence in our Maker, without which our re-union to him would be impossible. All these things are entirely undiscoverable without Revelation. At the same time, the complication, vastness, and grandeur, of the scheme, place it evidently beyond the utmost efforts of human invention.

4thly. *Christ has also taught us the Means, by which we may obtain immortal life.*

Had we been informed, that there is such a state of existence beyond the grave ; and that within the Universe there are means, by which, in some supposable progress of events, some happily directed series of efforts, we might become possessed of this glorious privilege ; and yet those means were unrevealed and unknown ; the Revelation which we possessed would be of no use, except to plunge us in anguish and despair. We might, nay, we should, pant, and pine, and agonize, to find the path which led to the Divine possession ; but we should agonize in vain. In this mighty article, important beyond all estimation, reaching every nerve of the soul, and, in such a case, harassing it with delirious suspense, Reason is lame, helpless, and useless. To her, the terms, on which God will bestow this invaluable boon, are hidden in *a book sealed with seven seals* ; which, whether learned, or unlearned, she is equally unable to open or to read.

The only ground, on which Reason can conclude, or even hope, that God will admit any Intelligent creatures to the enjoyment of immortal life, is, *that of pleasing him alway*. Whatever the character of God may be in other respects, he cannot but choose to be pleased. It is impossible, that he should not love those who please him, and hate those who displease him : for this is no more than to say, that he is pleased with those who please him, and displeased with those who displease him. But those whom he loves he will certainly bless ; and those whom he hates he will as certainly punish.

If God is a holy Being, he must be pleased with holiness, and displeased with sin: in other words, he must be pleased with love and obedience rendered to him, and displeased with enmity and disobedience. Plain and awful as these dictates are, man has neither loved him nor obeyed. Hence, he is certainly displeased with man. In what manner then shall God become reconciled to man; or man obtain an interest in his favour? "Wherewith shall he come before the Lord, and bow himself before the most high God? Shall he come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil?" Alas! *his are the cattle on a thousand hills*; and we should only offer him that, which is already his own. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith JEHOVAH: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats." Even reason itself, purblind as it is with respect to moral subjects, cannot fail to see that *it is impossible for the blood of bulls, and of goats to take away sin. Shall he then give his first-born for his transgression? the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul?* How plainly would this be only a vain and melancholy attempt to expiate one sin by committing another. Unfortunately, for every purpose of this nature Reason clearly discerns, that God needs not us nor our offerings. To Him, who *of the stones of the street can raise up children to Abraham*, such creatures as we are can plainly be of no value.

Shall we then attempt by the obedience of to-day to atone for the sins of yesterday? Alas! all our services of to-day are due for the day; and we were bound to serve him yesterday, no less than to-day. But we serve and love him less, incomprehensibly less, to-day, and every day, than we ought; and go finally to the grave with all these sins and all these transgressions on our heads, without any atonement, without any satisfaction, even for one. What, then, will Reason tell us that we can do, sufficient to obtain our reconciliation with God? To this momentous question, out-running in its importance the comprehension of man, Reason can give no answer. Wherever she turns her eyes, she sees nothing but a blank of perplexity, distress, and despair.

The Dispensation, by which mankind become reconciled to God, is the most wonderful of all his works. *Great beyond measure, surpassing all understanding, glorious beyond all praise, is the mystery of Godliness; God manifested in the flesh; justified in the spirit; seen of Angels; preached unto the Gentiles; believed on in the world; received up into glory!*

But even after the atonement of Christ was accomplished, Reason was equally at a loss, as before, concerning the manner in which mankind might become interested in that atonement, and attain the blessings to which it opened the access. Here Revelation was equally indispensable, as in the very first stage of this all-interesting inquiry. Revelation alone could teach us, that, in order to the attainment of immortal life, we were to become the seed, the children, of the Redeemer; that our union to him was to be accomplished by faith, a voluntary surrender of our souls into his hands, as a humble, cordial, and eternal offering; that, when thus offered, he would accept us; that he would defend us from all enemies, give us the victory over death, raise us from the grave, and acquit us in the judgment; and that the Father would forgive our sins for his sake, accept us as his children and friends, and in this character would bestow on us the blessings of a glorious immortality.

The means, here pointed out for the attainment of this Divine inheritance, while they are thus wonderful, are all such, as become the perfect character of God; and are exactly suited to the circumstances of frail, sinning, perishing man. They are obvious; they are effectual. They are easy; they are delightful. Rich blessings in themselves, they are the high-way to all other blessings.

Thus, in every thing, interesting to man, is immortal life brought to light by Christ in the Gospel.

REMARKS.

From these considerations we cannot fail to realize, in the 1st. place, *The Excellence of the Redeemer.*

What condescension, benignity, labours, and sufferings, has Christ exhibited in the mighty work of obtaining for us immortal life. Lord of all things, to accomplish this work he became a

servant. Honourable above all beings, he submitted himself to the contempt and rejection of men. Happy beyond all beings, he became *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*. Needing nothing for himself, he purchased, with his own blood, every thing for *us*. Hated, persecuted, and nailed to the cross, he remembered sinners with infinite compassion; and died only, that they might live. For you, and me, and such as we are, were all these things done. When we were friendless and helpless, he became our almighty and everlasting Friend. Unchanged by our provocations, undiscouraged by our backslidings, with tenderness immutable and unlimited, he brought us out of endless sin and misery, and raised us to endless holiness, life, and joy. How, then, ought we to prize him above all things, and *determined to know nothing in comparison with Jesus Christ, and him crucified*; to consecrate ourselves to his service, and *study what we shall render to him for his benefits!* Who, with these considerations in view, can fail to exclaim, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of Him, who bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth Salvation; that saith unto Zion, 'Thy God reigneth.'"

2dly. *From the same considerations we learn, that the Gospel is of inestimable value.*

In this scheme of immortal life revealed in the Gospel, you have seen that the richest blessings are proffered and communicated to mankind. Here are riches endless, and enjoyments infinite. Here are all things which can make the soul wise and virtuous; the body, vigorous, beautiful, and undecaying; and the man, immortal, glorious, and happy, a friend, a child of God, an inhabitant of his house, and an heir of his Universe. These blessings, the same Gospel teaches us, not only exist, but may be ours; discloses the manner, in which they may be obtained; points out all the means of the attainment; and places those means in our power. They are means open to all men. "The poor have the Gospel preached unto them." No school of Philosophy needs be sought out, in order to find the path to heaven. The Sanctuary unfolds its doors to the child and the peasant, the beggar and the slave; and invites them to enter in, and be saved. The Bible opens its pages and its promises to every perishing sinner, so that

he who runs may read; and pointing, with its unerring index, to the path of life, proclaims, "This is the Way, walk ye therein."

3dly. *These considerations show us what enemies Infidels are to themselves, and to their fellow-men.*

Infidels, although born in a Christian land, and, (painful to remember,) often *baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, voluntarily become heathen. They do not, indeed, worship *Jupiter* and *Apollo*; nor prostrate themselves before stocks and stones; for, usually, they worship no God, whether false or true. But they place themselves on the same foundation with the heathen, for acceptance with God. They reject the Bible; deny the Saviour; and renounce the immortal life of the Gospel. In every respect, therefore, they are heathen, except that they refuse light which the heathen never enjoyed; and cast away blessings of which the ancient heathen never heard. Their sins, therefore, are exceedingly aggravated beyond those of their predecessors. God *would* save them; but they will not be saved. Christ would redeem them from their sins; but they refuse to be redeemed. Immortal life is ready to descend upon them; the gates of heaven are opened, that they may enter in, and become partakers of its glorious blessings; but they turn their backs upon the proffer, and reject it with disdain. What folly was ever so entire! What maniac was ever so much his own enemy!

Nothing, however, is farther from the Infidel's own thoughts. *St. Paul* exclaims, in the full confidence of his own inspiration, and triumphing in the infinite superiority of the Evangelical system to the wild dreams of Philosophy, "Where is the wise man? where is the Scribe? where is the disputer of this world?" To these questions the Infidel, with a cool and settled front, answers, "Here am I, who assemble all these characters in my own person. I know that the Bible is not the word of God. I can devise a better scheme of Salvation, than that of Christ. I can form better precepts, than those of my Maker. I can disprove his perfections. I can show, that he did not create, and that he does not govern, the Universe. Nay, I can prove that there is no God."

The amount of all these magnificent pretensions, and the real results, which have flowed from the reason of man, thus *puffed up*, and thus *vaunting itself*, I have formerly exhibited, summarily, in

two discourses on the "Dangers of Infidel Philosophy." It will therefore be unnecessary for me, as well as impossible, to repeat them here.

Were I warranted, in an interview with a person of this character, to exercise the frankness, as well as the candour, which a case so solemn would evidently demand; I would address him in some such manner, as the following. "Who art thou, that thus exaltest thyself against thy Maker? A worm, born yesterday of the dust, to return to the same dust to-morrow! and yet declaring thyself able to scan the Universe, to comprehend the thoughts of Omniscience, and to measure the arm of the Almighty!"

"Rend the veil, which has so long covered thine eyes; and open them upon the world around thee. What dost thou behold? An Universe of wonders. Whence were they derived? "From fate," thou wilt answer; "or from chance; or from the attributes and operations of matter, proceeding in an eternal series." Dost thou not perceive, that in this assignment of so many, and so various, causes for the origination of all things, thou declarest thy absolute ignorance of any cause? If the true cause were known to thee, thou wouldest certainly point it out; and not creep, for a retreat, into these alternatives. If fate is the cause, then chance is not: if chance, then the cause is not found in the attributes and operations of matter."

"What is fate? A word. What is its meaning? Nothing. Search thy own mind, and thou wilt perceive, that this abstract term has *there* had, hitherto, no signification. Annex meaning to it; and it becomes, of course, God."

"Survey yonder tree. Dost thou not perceive, that it is a wonderful system of contrivances; of innumerable parts, formed into a complete whole? Are the roots casually formed? Is the stem casually annexed to them? and successively, the branches, leaves, flowers, fruits, and seeds? If these things do not manifest contrivance; has the word any meaning?"

"Examine thy own body. Are the bones, sinews, nerves, the vascular system, the limbs, the trunk, the head, and the features of the face, the offspring of casualty? Did chance arrange them, with such symmetry, into a frame so mysterious? and commence its more mysterious, and more wonderful *operations*?"

“ Look at thy mind. Is chance the parent of thought? of science? of wisdom? of moral action? of virtue?”

“ Didst thou ever see, didst thou ever hear of, a casualty? Thou wilt be compelled to reply in the negative. Where, then, and why, and when, did this supposed torrent of casualties begin, and cease, to flow?”

“ If the inherent attributes of matter are the causes of its operations, those operations must have existed in an eternal series. But dost thou not perceive intuitively, that an eternal series is a self-contradiction?”

“ Of what is the Universe composed? Of Atoms. What binds them together, so as to constitute worlds and systems? Thou wilt say, *Attraction*. What is attraction? To this question thou canst give no answer. Dost thou not perceive, that this word denotes an effect; and not a cause? a fact; and not the power, by which it is produced? Of this power thou knowest nothing: and yet it is boundless, unwearied, and eternal.”

“ Remove, then, this mental rubbish of Infidelity; and acknowledge, what thou canst not deny, that there is a God. His hand lighted up the sun; rolled the planets around him; kindled the stars; and marked out the mysterious course of the moon. The same hand sprinkled this world with verdure, beauty, and magnificence; formed man upon it; gave him *the breath of life*; and caused him to *become a living soul*. He, also, has, from the beginning, *given rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons; and filled the hearts of mankind with food and gladness*. In all this *he has not left himself*, to any sober, discerning eye, *without ample witness* of his existence, presence, agency, and character.”

“ Of this same great and glorious Being thou art the workmanship; indebted to Him for every thing, which thou hast enjoyed; and dependent on him for every thing, which thou canst hope. But against this Being thou hast sinned. By whatever law thou believest thyself governed, that law thou hast broken. To Him thou hast been ungrateful, impious, and rebellious; to thy fellow-men, unjust, unkind, and insincere; and to thyself, a continual source of moral pollution. For these sins thou canst make no atonement; and allege no excuse. Of them all he has been an eye, and an ear, witness. Thou durst not believe, that *he is not*

of purer eyes, than to behold iniquity. Thy own reason declares, with a silent, but solemn voice, that God cannot but hate sin, and cannot bless sinners. Look at the manner in which he executes vengeance upon this guilty world. Mark the ravages of the storm, the desolating miseries of famine and pestilence, and the devastations of the earthquake and the volcano. See oppression grind the race of man to the dust; and war dye the world in blood. With these terrible proofs of his justice before thine eyes, will it be possible for thee to comprehend, or to measure, his future vengeance against iniquity?"

"Thou art a sinner. Thy own conscience has a thousand times declared this tremendous truth. Should he summon thee to account for thy sins hereafter, what wilt thou answer? From his eye where wilt thou hide? From his hand how wilt thou escape? With what agonies wilt thou then wish, that thou hadst acknowledged, believed, and obeyed, his Word? With what sighs will thy bosom heave, with what throes will thy heart wring, for an interest in that divine Redeemer, whom in this world thou hast only *crucified afresh by thy unbelief!* Dost thou not see, that thou art sacrificing thyself on the altar of Infidelity, and murdering thy soul as a victim to sinful pleasure?"

"What then is thy hope? Annihilation. But how dost thou know that God will annihilate thee? Stung by thy guilt, thou hast made thyself willing, or persuaded thyself that thou art willing, to see the living light of the mind go out in eternal darkness. But will He, who kindled it, suffer it to expire? Shouldst thou continue to exist after death, how terrible a state of existence will eternity prove to thee!"

"Accompany me to yonder cemetery. Whose graves do I see? In *this* thy father is interred: in *that*, sleep the remains of thy mother. They were Christians. They loved God; they trusted in the Redeemer; they practised holiness; and, from this melancholy world, they ascended to heaven. In that delightful world, amid all its glories, they wait impatiently for the arrival of thee, their beloved child, to complete their joys. But they wait in vain. Thy path is only downward. Thou hast destined thyself to the regions of annihilation. Nay, thou wouldst pluck them from the foot of the eternal throne; extinguish their immortal

life ; strip them of angelic happiness ; and hurl them down to the same dark and desolate abyss. Miserable man !”

“ Open thine eyes, if they are not finally closed in moral darkness, and see before thee the melancholy regions of woe, where the groan of anguish resounds, and the stream of tears flows without intermission, and without end ; and where death and despair stretch their iron sceptre, forever, over the dreary solitude ! Dost thou tremble at the prospect ? Look behind thee. and behold Goodness and Mercy, twin-born of heaven, and arrayed in robes of uncreated light, stand, anxiously watching thy course, and beckon thee back to life ; while, at their side, Hope, with her lucid finger, points the path to immortality, and exclaims, with a smile of transport, ‘ Glory to God in the Highest ; peace on earth ; and good-will towards men !’ ”

SERMON XI.

TIDINGS OF A SAVIOUR. TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY.



LUKE ii. 10, 11.

And the Angel said unto them, fear not : for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born, this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

IN the preceding Chapter we are informed, that the Angel *Gabriel* was sent first to *Zacharias*, a priest ; and afterwards to *Mary*, a virgin of the family of *David* ; to announce to them, and through them to mankind, the birth of the Saviour. The birth of *John, the Baptist*, his harbinger in the great work of redeeming the world from sin and misery, was also predicted by the same illustrious person ; and in the appointed season was accomplished. On this occasion, *Zacharias*, who had been deprived of his speech, both to punish his unbelief, and to manifest the certainty of the prediction, resumed it in the same miraculous manner ; and uttered to those around him a memorable prophecy concerning the child already born, and the more wonderful infant whose birth was approaching.

The Context opens with an account of a decree, issued by the *Roman Emperor, Augustus Cæsar*, requiring all the inhabitants of *Judea* to enrol their names, for the purpose of being taxed. The ancient prophets, particularly *Micah*, had foretold, that the *Messiah* was to be born in *Bethlehem*, the city of *David*. By means perfectly natural and easy this prophecy was now accomplished.

In *Judea*, the register of every family was, according to custom, kept in the city to which that family was originally attached. *Bethlehem* was the city of *Joseph and Mary*, the parents of Christ. In obedience to this decree, therefore, they were necessitated to go up from *Nazareth*, where they usually lived, to be registered in *Bethlehem*. While they were here attending on this business, she brought forth her first-born Son, the Redeemer of mankind.

At this time there was a number of *Shepherds* in the neighbouring fields, KEEPING WATCH OVER THEIR FLOCKS BY NIGHT. As they were occupied in this employment, "the Angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." It cannot be wondered at that they were terrified by this vision, but the Angel soothed their fears, and restored their presence of mind, with these remarkable words: "Fear not; for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people: For unto you is born, this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. Ye shall find the Babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

Immediately there appeared "a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest; and on earth Peace: Good will towards men.'"

Such is a brief recital of the story, of which the text forms an interesting part; a story wholly singular, recounting events of a wonderful nature, and demanding from mankind the deepest attention.

My design in choosing these words, as the theme of the present discourse, is to endeavour to illustrate the declaration, made by the Angel; and to show, that *the tidings, which he published of the birth of a Saviour, are tidings of great joy to all people.*

This Doctrine I shall illustrate,

1st. *From the story, which has been summarily recounted.*

The person, who announced this intelligence to the shepherds of *Bethlehem*, was, it will be remembered, a person of high dignity. He was an inhabitant, and plainly no common one, of the highest heavens. In that happy world he had been formed with powers of an exalted kind; had stood from the beginning before the throne, and in the immediate presence, of God: had advanc-

ed for a vast period of time, in knowledge and virtue; and had been holden in high estimation among Cherubim and Seraphim. Ample knowledge to discern, and an unquestionable disposition to declare, the real nature of the tidings, which he proclaimed, were of course united in him, and left no room to doubt the truth of his declarations.

From his own happy residence he came to this world, for the very purpose of publishing these tidings to the human race. Delighted with the nature of this intelligence, he was pleased to be the messenger of it to the world, to which it was so interesting. With him came also a train of his immortal companions; all alike astonished and transported by the event which he announced; and all equally delighted to be present at the birth of the Stranger, who this night became a visiter to our ruined world.

The same illustrious beings had formerly attended him at the Creation; when they *sang together, and shouted for joy*, at the sight of the amazing things which he then accomplished. Their songs, they now renewed; and joined together in a hymn more noble, more divine, than had ever before proceeded from their lips. "Glory," they sung, "to God in the highest; and on Earth Peace; Good will towards men." God, they perfectly well knew, had been always infinitely glorious, and possessed of infinite good will to his Universe; but his glory was now peculiarly displayed, and his benevolence outshone all its former manifestations. The redemption, renovation, and forgiveness of sinners, were an exhibition of divine excellence, which enlarged the views, and elevated the praises, even of Angels; after all their preceding acquaintance with the heavenly system. In proclaiming these tidings, also, the Angel and his companions were wholly disinterested. They had never fallen, and needed therefore no Saviour to restore them to the favour of God. In that favour they now stood securely; and were assured by the divine goodness of unchangeable holiness and happiness forever. Still they rejoiced at the prospect of the restoration of the human race to the favour of God, and to their own happy society. The good, which they now enjoyed and celebrated, was the good of others; of a race of beings, united to them only as intelligent creatures of the same God; creatures, who had revolted from their Sovereign,

and opposed all the wishes and interests of his virtuous subjects. It was, therefore, a joy most benevolently felt in the mere diffusion of happiness: a happiness made their own by exalted participation, and divine sympathy.

It is further to be remembered, that, although they came to this world voluntarily, and were joyfully present on this occasion; yet they were sent hither *by their Father and our Father, by their God and our God.* Their mission they executed exactly, as well as gladly; and disclosed *his* views as well as *their own.* In declaring these to be tidings of great joy, they announced the decision of God himself, and proclaimed the views, formed concerning this subject by infinite wisdom and goodness. Through them, therefore, mankind are assured, that these are tidings of great joy, not only in the estimation of angels, but also in that of Jehovah.

2dly. *The situation, in which mankind were, when these tidings were brought to them, strongly exhibits the truth of the doctrine.*

The whole human race were in a state of determined rebellion against God. Since the Apostasy of *Adam*, there is not the least reason to believe, that a single member of his great family has been born with a disposition to obey and glorify his Creator; that even one solitary instance can be found among his numerous progeny, in which a mind, pure and unbiassed, has loved God, cherished Righteousness, and hated sin, with all the heart; or that the heavenly character has ever made its appearance, unmixed and unsullied, in this polluted world. On the contrary the scriptural declarations, which *conclude all men under sin, and pronounce every imagination of man's heart to be evil, and only evil,* are, and ever have been, completely verified by the concurring experience of all ages and nations.

As thus guilty and rebellious, mankind were condemned by the holy, righteous, and reasonable law, which they had violated; and were of course exposed to its dreadful penalty. The law was immutable, like its Author; and for the same reason; viz. that it was perfect. Death, therefore, endless and hopeless, was the proper and certain lot of all men: for the law specified no condition, on which transgressors might return; furnished no promise to repentance; and communicated no hope of redemption.

In themselves there was no relief for their distresses. and no

means of escape from their danger. They could make no atonement for their sins; for all their services were due, of course, for the time being. They could offer no righteousness to reconcile them to God; for their best righteousness was the polluted offering of unclean and rebellious creatures. The door of life was therefore shut to them; and could not be opened.

If relief existed for them in the divine system; it lay beyond their discovery. In the present world it was unknown. With the future world they had no connection. From the regions where life is found, no messenger, independently of Christ's mediation, had ever visited this residence of apostasy; and no tidings had ever arrived of designs formed for their deliverance, or of hopes indulged concerning their restoration. If such designs existed; if such hopes were entertained; they were hidden from their knowledge in a book, sealed with seven seals.

Thus all the prospects were dark and desolate. A desert of ruin spread immeasurably around them; without a habitation to which they might betake themselves for shelter, or even a friendly hermit to point out a hopeful end to their melancholy pilgrimage. Over their heads extended, without limits, a dreary and perpetual night, in which no lamp lighted their bewildered path, and not a star, not a ray of hope or comfort twinkled through the vast gloom of sorrow and despair.

The destruction, to which they were devoted, was an awful and comprehensive destruction; involving all evil, and excluding all good. Eternal sin, and eternal suffering, constituted this compound of woe. *In the land of darkness, as darkness itself, where there is no order, and where the light is as darkness,* they were banished forever from the presence of the Lord God, originally their Sun and their shield, their light and their protection, and from the friendship and intercourse of every virtuous being. Here, forsaken and forgotten, distressed with the pains of an immortal body, and agonized with the throes of an ever-dying mind, they were utterly cast off from the virtuous universe, as objects of unchangeable contempt and abhorrence.

While this was their certain, and irremediable destiny; they still did not even wish for deliverance. *They sinned against God, and wronged their own souls; they hated him, and loved Death.*

Accordingly they never sought nor prayed, neither desired nor laboured, for life ; but cherished their misery, and were in love with their ruin. Heaven in all its long succession of ages, and amid all the sweet incense, which ascended continually before the throne of God, never heard a single prayer rise from this lost world for the renewal of one corrupted mind, or the salvation of one self-destroyed sinner, except as a consequence of the tidings of a Saviour.

3dly. *The Saviour, who, when they were in this wretched condition, was born unto them, is able, willing, and faithful, to save them from this complicated misery.*

That he is able to save, even to the uttermost, all that will come unto God by him, is evinced by arguments, which cannot be doubted.

All things are delivered into his hands, and all power in heaven and in earth is committed to him. His name is above every name, which is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come ; and he is head over all things to his church. By him also all things consist, and he upholds them all by the word of his power. All things also were made for him ; for his use, and pleasure. Hence they will be made subservient to the purposes of his redemption, and the salvation of returning sinners.

At the same time, while he knows whatever is within man, or without, he *knows the Father also* ; the character, pleasure, and designs, of JEHOVAH. The worlds of creation, and providence, he searches alike ; and is therefore perfectly qualified to pronounce on every thing, which is proper to be done ; whether as useful to men, or pleasing to God. With this perfect knowledge he began the work of redeeming love ; and cannot be deceived in any thing, which pertains to its completion.

At the same time, he is a person of supreme excellency and loveliness, of supreme dignity and greatness. He is *the beloved Son of God, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. In him the Father is ever well pleased.* Infinite wisdom regards him as the assemblage, of all that is great and good ; *as the light of the world, and the glory of heaven.* Of course his attributes qualify him for every purpose ; however vast, however arduous, however incredible, it may seem to created minds. In

this character he was appointed by his Father, as *the Saviour of his own choice*; the atonement which he was pleased to accept; the Redeemer in whom his soul delighted.

He knew *the way of righteousness*; and was perfectly acquainted with eternal life. In the world, where that life is found, he had ever dwelt; and from the beginning had been possessed of all the things which constitute its nature, or bring it into existence. As he had always pleased God; so he knew entirely the things, with which he is pleased. The doctrines, therefore, and the precepts, the disposition of the heart and the conduct of the life, which secure his favour; he was wholly qualified to teach, and enjoin.

In all things, also, he was made like unto us, his brethren; sin only excepted; that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Nor was he less *willing*, than able, to accomplish our salvation. For this single purpose, he entered voluntarily on the most arduous of all enterprises; descended from heaven; *made himself of no reputation*; or as in the original language, *emptied himself*; i. e. of his supreme external glory; *took upon him the form of a servant*, and was found in fashion as a man. In this situation he obeyed the law, which man had broken, and thus *magnified and made it honourable*, in the sight of the universe; atoned for the sins, which they had committed; was made a curse, to deliver those, who were under the curse of the law; and *became obedient to death; even the death of the cross*; that we might live. His willingness to save, even to the uttermost, who can question?

These things are equally evidences, that he is *faithful* to save, and can never be changed from a purpose, which he has thus undertaken. In the mean time, he *is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever*: the same divinely great, excellent, and glorious person, from everlasting to everlasting. From the beginning *he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men*. That love for men, with which he prayed, and died, on the cross, ever dwells in his bosom; susceptible of no change, no decay.

All possible confidence is therefore due to him, and may be safely placed on him ; for he is just such a Saviour as we need, *such an High Priest as became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens, and seated on the right hand of the throne of the majesty on high : where he ever appears in the presence of God for us, to make an eternal and effectual intercession.*

4thly. *The blessings, to which he invites us, and which he will bestow on all, who heartily accept of them, strongly illustrate the truth of the doctrine.*

These blessings are noble, exquisite, and enduring, beyond the conception of finite minds. They extend alike to the soul and to the body ; they fill time ; they spread through eternity. In this world, they are formed of unceasing protection, guidance, support, consolation, holiness, *peace which passeth all understanding, hope which is an anchor to the soul in the stormy sea of life, and joy which the world can neither give nor take away.* They include the best provision for our wants, the best conduct of our lives, and the perfect security of our well being. They commence with our sanctification ; they attend us through life ; they accompany us in death ; they follow us beyond the grave.

In the future world, they assume a still brighter aspect. *There our vile bodies will be refashioned like unto Christ's glorious body ; according to that mysterious working, whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.* Adorned, and invigorated, with youth, strength, beauty and immortality, they will be reunited to our minds, made perfectly holy and excellent. In the highest heavens, the house of God, we shall dwell in his presence, be made members and brethren of his family ; advance forever in knowledge and virtue, in wisdom and loveliness, in peace and joy ; meet the smiles of infinite complacency, commence a pure and perpetual friendship with the world of sanctified minds, become *sons, and kings, and priests, to God the Father ; and joint heirs with the Redeemer to his immortal inheritance ; shall be with him where he is ; and shall behold and receive the glory, which he had with the Father before ever the world was.* Are not these blessings great enough to fill the wishes even of an immortal mind ? Could an Angel ask more ? Can we hope for the one half of

these? Can we realize, can we believe, that they will be given to such beings as we are? Yet these, and far more than human language can express, or human imaginations conceive, he possessed from everlasting; and these he has of his own accord, unasked, undesired, proffered to our acceptance: declaring that all things in the universe, in time and through eternity, shall *work together for good to them that love God.*

5thly. *The terms, on which these blessings are given, clearly impress the truth of the doctrine.*

A sincere, cordial acceptance of these blessings, and of him as the Author and Giver of them; is all that is required. Who could wish for easier terms?

In this great and essential condition is included a hearty, faithful and final renovation of an evil, guilty, odious and despicable Character; the parent of all other misery, and itself finished and endless misery. On the other hand, we are required, also, to assume the honourable character of holiness; to become virtuous, useful, and amiable; to love and obey, to believe and imitate, Christ; to exercise an evangelical benevolence to our fellow creatures; to sustain an unblameable character; and to direct our views to great and deserving objects. We must efface the image of apostate *Adam*, and be instamped with that of *JEHOVAH*.

What terms, were they left to our own choice, could we devise more easy, more reasonable, more desirable? They are terms, indispensably necessary to make us possessed of the blessings given; and they are all that is necessary. They are blessings, great and glorious in themselves; and the efficacious means of immortal blessings. The sacrifices, which we make, are sacrifices of loss, shame, and ruin; the character, which we assume, is in itself gain immense and eternal.

6thly. *The truth of the doctrine is also illustrated by this great fact, that he has completely disclosed the means, by which these blessings may be attained.*

He has taught us all the knowledge, useful to this end.

He has taught the character and pleasure of God; his designs, his providence, and his promises. He has also discovered to us our character, guilt, danger, and wants. His own excellency and amiableness, the necessity of his interference on our behalf, and

the greatness of his love to us, he has proved, beyond a question, by his humiliation, life and death; by every thing which he has done, and by every thing which he has suffered. The truths, universally, which we must believe, the duties which we must do, the dangers which we must shun, and the means of our escape and safety; he has set before us in language which cannot be misunderstood, unless we choose to misunderstand it. Motives innumerable and infinite he has presented to us in the most affecting forms: purification from sin, and deliverance from woe; the enjoyment of his love; the possession of endless life, knowledge and virtue, undisturbed safety, peace, and joy; and the communion and friendship of the whole body of the wise and good in the great kingdom of JEHOVAH. All times, places and things, impress these motives on our hearts, and bring them up to our view, with an efficacy, which cannot be described.

These instructions, and these motives, he has also caused *to be written with the unerring hand of his own Spirit*. The book, in which they are contained, is thus rendered every day, and in every place, a certain, standing guide; a closet monitor, a perpetual preacher of righteousness; a visitor at the daily board; a companion in every walk, and in every solitude.

To render its monitions and counsels effectual to our salvation, *he has sent his own divine Spirit into the world, to convince us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment*; to incline us to hear and to obey, to be wise and to be safe; to preserve, comfort, quicken and direct us in our wanderings, doubts and dangers; and to conduct us in the end to his house and family in the heavens.

To these things he has added *his own perfect Example*, as a complete pattern of righteousness for our imitation; and a glorious combination of motives for our encouragement and support. He has thus taught us how to live, and how to die: how to please God, and how to gain a blessed immortality. He has taught us in what manner we may resist temptation, grow in grace, *and in favour with God and man*; and in the end *become meet to be partakers, with him, in the inheritance, which is undefiled and fadeth not away*.

Finally, to remove all our doubts and fears, and to seal the truth and certainty of every thing which he has taught and pro-

mised, and of every thing which he has undertaken or done, he *has voluntarily ascended the cross, and poured out his blood on the accursed tree.* In this amazing transaction, he has placed on his instructions, and conduct, the stamp of infinity, the seal of a God.

REMARKS.

From these observations. which, if I mistake not, place the doctrine beyond debate. we can scarcely fail to remark in the

1st place, *The very different views, which men and Angels have entertained of the character and mediation of Christ, as expressed in their different treatment of this glorious person.*

When the Redeemer of mankind was about to appear in this guilty world, *Gabriel* descended from heaven, to announce his advent to *Zacharias*; and came, a second time, to declare the same glad tidings to his mother *Mary*. His actual birth an Angel published with peculiar exultation to the *Bethlehem* shepherds; and, in connection with a choir of his dignified companions, sung his natal hymn, and the goodness and glory of God displayed in his mission, as they rose to the heavens. After his temptation was ended, a band of these celestial beings appeared, again, to minister to his wants, and to receive his commands. In the garden of *Gethsemane*, one of their number came, to strengthen him, under his agony, charged, as there is good reason to believe, with a message from on high. *An Angel rolled away the stone from his sepulchre, whose countenance was like lightning, and at whose presence the earth trembled, and the Roman guards became as dead men.* Two Angels, humbly seated in his tomb, announced his resurrection to his desponding followers. Two Angels, *in shining garments*, comforted and instructed them again, when he made his final ascension to the right hand of God. Angels repeatedly appeared to protect, relieve and guide, his disciples, in the progress of their arduous ministry. The same heavenly messengers *taught St. John* the glorious things, which the Apocalypse discloses concerning all the following ages of time. Throughout the whole *multitude of the heavenly host*, exquisite joy has been diffused by every victory of the Cross, over ignorance, sorrow, and sin; and *the repentance of one returning sinner*

has excited over all the great world of happiness, more transport and higher praise than the continuance of *ninety-nine just persons, who needed no repentance*, in their obedience to God.

How unlike this has been the conduct of men towards the same exalted person? When he was born in *Bethlehem*, his only mansion was a stable; his only cradle was a manger. When he was less than two years old, a *man* sought his life with such eagerness, that to secure his destruction, he murdered every infant of that age in the city in which he was born. When he came forth to his public ministry, although declared by the visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, and the audible voice of the Almighty, to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of mankind; he was still denied, rejected, and persecuted, from place to place; and, with a poverty singular and excessive, *had not where to lay his head*. His whole life was spent in a course of the most sublime virtue, and in performing actions equally wonderful and beneficent; yet he was hated, calumniated, and devoted to death, on multiplied occasions, by the arts and efforts of the guilty, ruined beings, whom he came to save. By these guilty beings, his own countrymen and kindred, he was betrayed, falsely accused, and causelessly condemned, nailed to the cross, and consigned to the grave.

With the same spirit have men, in every succeeding age, continually *crucified him afresh, accounting the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite to the Spirit of Grace*, whom he sent into the world, to carry into execution the benevolent design of his life and death. In every age, and in every land, he has been disbelieved, denied, rejected, and followed with scorn and derision, with hatred and persecution. His truth has been stained with every slander, and mocked with every insult. While *angels, stooping down from heaven, have eagerly desired to look into the things, pertaining to his mediation*; human philosophy has been employed in coldly investigating, and roundly denying, their truth, reasonableness and probability; in decrying their wisdom, and excellency; and in preferring, without a blush, heathen idolaters, and infidel sophists, debauchees, and villains, to the perfect Redeemer. While the providence of God has been employed in preserving and building

up the church. formed of his followers, human power and profligacy have dislocated them on the rack broken them on the wheel, and roasted them at the stake; turned the house of God into a field of blood, and converted his altar into a catacomb. Christianity was ushered into this bloody world on the hill of *Calvary*; and commenced its progress on the cross. Accursed *Jews*, iron-hearted *Pharisees* and *Sadducees*, with a *Pilate* died in blood at their head, began the crimson career. *Pharisees*, *Sadducees*, and *Pilates*, have in every country. and in every succeeding age, been their numerous progeny. The world has become one vast *Calvary*; and crucifixion, torture, and death, have been the common work, the rage, the sport, of the race of *Adam*. Such has been the conduct of Angels; such the conduct of men; and such their different views of Christ, and his Redemption.

2dly. *We learn from the observations, made on the doctrine, the disposition, with which these tidings ought to be received by mankind: viz. the same, with which they were published by the Angel.*

That the Angel, who brought these tidings, understood their true nature and import. will not be questioned; nor will it be doubted. that he disclosed his real views of them to the shepherds. His declaration might, therefore, well suffice to satisfy us, that they are tidings of great joy. But we are not compelled to rest on his decision only, nor to be governed merely by his views, or those of his illustrious companions. The nature of the message, and the circumstances which attended it, will amply determine the truth of the assertion.

The tidings, which this glorious person published, and which his companions repeated in their hymn, are tidings brought to rebels against their Saviour. and their God; apostates, condemned to misery and debasement supreme, irremediable, and eternal. They are tidings of deliverance from this debasement, and this ruin; of their justification before God at the final trial; a reversal of their sentence; a renovation of their character; and their reinstatement in all their former privileges, blessings, and hopes. They are published to those, who before had no hope of deliverance, and no means of escape; who neither knew, asked, nor wished, for safety; who *hated life, and loved death*, who were

despised, forsaken, and friendless, through time and through eternity.

They are tidings from heaven ; the world of hope, of peace and of joy ; their proper home ; the house of their father. They are tidings to prodigals and outcasts ; who were destined to wander forever ; who had no place of rest, where they might lay their heads. They are tidings from God, the parent, the Saviour, whom they had offended ; and to whom it was their infinite interest to be reunited. They are tidings of renewed holiness to beings given over to endless sin ; of peace and reconciliation to beings consigned to eternal alienation ; and of immortal life to beings sentenced to die forever. They are tidings, which communicate the happiest and easiest terms, on which these blessings may be had ; unfold the means, by which they may be certainly attained ; and present the motives, which, with infinite force, allure and urge to the attainment.

They are published to a great world in ruins ; and proclaim its restoration to hope and to happiness. They convey the richest blessings in the gift of JEHOVAH to this ruined world. Of the communication of these blessings, or any other, to such a world, heaven had utterly despaired ; and heard the voice, which first announced them with universal wonder, ecstasy, and praise. All her regions rung with gratulation, and resounded *blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.* Not one sinner, merely, was now beheld as repenting and returning, but a world of sinners. The regions of immortality were now to be peopled by creatures of this new and unexpected character ; and everlasting joy was seen to be extended by the future arrival of these extraordinary companions. The Saviour, who is announced, is the Saviour of men. Every child of *Adam*, who hears the glorious news, may point to him, and exclaim, " This is *my Redeemer.* For my deliverance is he come. *For me* he became incarnate, lived, and died. For me he rose again, and ascended to the heavens. To wash away my sins he poured out his blood. To intercede for my soul he stands before the throne. To me he cries, ' Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you

rest.' To me he calls, 'Buy wine and milk, without money and without price.' "

Who, with these tidings resounding in his ear, would not exult? Who would not join in the angelic hymn, *Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace: Good will towards men?* Who would not feel and exclaim, Though I have been dead, yet I am alive again; though I have been lost, yet am I found.

3dly. How strange and guilty must be the disposition of him, who will not rejoice in such a Saviour!

How blind must he be to his guilt, his condemnation, and his ruin? How insensible to his odiousness and deformity? How torpid to the wrath of an offended God, to an approaching judgment, to an opening hell?

What ingratitude must defile his heart towards this amiable and excellent person? What stupidity must debase his mind, while he marks the condescension, the labours, the self-denial, the sufferings, of the Son of God, which procured eternal life, for the soul; and is yet deaf to the voice of the heavenly charmer, charming him with divine wisdom and tenderness, and calling to him to repent, and return, and live? How lost is he to life, and holiness, and happiness. How buried in the sleep of death, and guilt, and woe? How wise in his own conceit; and yet how bereft in fact of reason; how poor and wretched a maniac, dreaming that his dungeon is a palace, his tatters robes of state, his straw hat a diadem, and his dunghill a throne; giving mock orders to his fellow bedlamites, and mistaking it for empire; clanking his chains, and calling it harmony. *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider.*

4thly. With what eagerness, according to this doctrine, ought mankind to embrace the offers of salvation! Let me address this remark immediately to my audience.

You, as well as the rest of mankind, are sharers in all the wants, dangers and miseries, which I have mentioned. Your souls are the subjects of sin and guilt, are exposed to the wrath of God, and infinitely need to be forgiven, and saved, by Christ. The same death is hastening to summon you to the future world; the same grave is opening to receive you; the same judgment is waiting for

your appearance ; the same world of misery rejoices in your impenitence and approach ; the same dark and comfortless regions sigh for your condemnation ; the same evil spirits exult over your ruin, and hail with dreadful prescience your arrival to their agonies.

Your souls can never cease to be. They may live : if they embrace Christ, they will live : if they reject him, they will die forever.

Bring these things home to your hearts. Spare a solitary moment from the world, and sense and sin ; and ponder soberly on your situation, and your prospects.

Without the love, the atonement, and the intercession of Christ, how will you disarm death, and triumph over the grave ? Who will guide your lonely and anxious steps through the unknown world ; sustain your hearts before the last tribunal ; acquit you of your immeasurable guilt ; and redeem you from endless darkness, and despair ?

Who will conduct you to heaven ? Who will provide for you immortal good ; support you with self-approbation and peace ; adorn you with beauty and excellency ; inspire you with love ; improve and refine you with wisdom ; instamp on you the glorious image of God ; and bring you to the General Assembly of the first-born, as their eternal friend and companion ? Who will unlock for you the springs of life ; who will feed you with living bread ? Who will clothe you with unfading robes of Righteousness ? Who will fix you in mansions of everlasting joy ? Who in a word will be your light, your portion, and your friend forever ?

SERMON XII.

ON A GOOD PROFESSION.



1 TIMOTHY vi. 12.

——— *Lay hold on eternal life; whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.*

IN this passage *St. Paul* exhorts *Timothy* to lay hold on eternal life; and presents two powerful motives to engage him in the pursuit. Of these the first is, that he has been called by God to take possession of this glorious inheritance. The call, here spoken of, not only intends the general invitation of the Gospel, but also that, which by the *Westminster Assembly* is styled *Effectual calling*: the internal call of the divine Spirit. The second is the good profession, which he had professed before many witnesses. *Timothy* had publicly professed the religion of Christ before many witnesses; thus declaring, that this was the religion of his choice; and solemnly given himself up to the Redeemer as one of his disciples. In the former of these transactions God had bound him to seek eternal life: in the latter, he had bound himself. More powerful reasons could not be alleged, why he should continue to seek with unremitting diligence and fervour this all important object.

The profession, which *Timothy* had made of the religion of the Gospel, in this case, was a public profession: for it was made before many witnesses. *St. Paul* declares it also to have been a good profession; and in this, as he spoke by inspiration, could not be deceived.

The same religion is publicly professed in our churches: as it plainly ought to be. That the profession, when made, ought also

to be good, cannot rationally be denied ; for it can hardly be supposed that any other will be acceptable to God.

In the following discourse it is my design to consider the subject with some attention. In pursuing this design I shall consider,

I. *What a good profession of the Christian religion is.*

II. *What is that state of mind, in which a profession may be made.*

I. *What is a good profession of the Christian religion ?*

A good profession of the Christian religion is, in the 1st place, A declaration that we believe the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel.

That some doctrines of the Gospel are fundamental will hardly be questioned by any man, who believes the Gospel to be a Revelation. Doctrines of the Gospel are truths ; conformity to which in our hearts and lives will entitle us to the favour of God. Such as will be condemned at the final day, among those who know the Gospel, we are assured, will be condemned because *they obey not the Gospel*. But it is clearly certain, that what we do not believe we cannot obey. No man's heart or life, was, it is presumed, ever better than it would appear to be from the whole of the doctrines, which he believed.

Among these doctrines, however, some are obviously of more importance than others ; and of such, as possess this importance, some are obviously essential to the very nature of the scheme, of which they are parts. This is true of *all* systems of thought ; whatever may be their nature, or subject. Most evidently is it true of the Evangelical system. There are certain truths of the Gospel, on which all the rest depend for their whole importance, and even for their meaning. If we believe not these, we believe not the Gospel : for without these the Gospel is nothing : if we love not these, we love not the Gospel : if we obey not these, we obey not the Gospel. If we believe not these, it is impossible, that we should love, or obey, them. No truth was ever loved, or obeyed, until after it was believed. And, as these truths constitute the substance and marrow of the Gospel, so, unless we believe them, it is impossible that the evangelical system should have its proper influence either on our hearts or our lives : in

other words, it is impossible, that we should be true disciples of our Redeemer.

It will not be doubted, that a man cannot be a Christian, unless he believes the Gospel. It is so often, and so expressly, declared in the Gospel itself, that faith is absolutely necessary to salvation, as to put to flight every hope of obtaining it without the possession of this attribute. Who, after hearing these declarations, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," can rationally expect to escape that wrath, or to obtain that life, without believing? To believe on the Son of God, then, is essential to the attainment of everlasting life. But, whatever else is included in this faith, it certainly involves a speculative belief of the truths, which are the immediate objects of faith. Without such belief there can be no faith. Accordingly those are declared to be *condemned*, universally, *who believe not the truth*. Those also, who will be finally saved, are declared to be *chosen to salvation*, not only *through the sanctification of the spirit*, but also *through belief of the truth*. Nay, the truth is declared to be the essential means of sanctification. "Sanctify them," says our Saviour in his intercessory prayer, "by thy truth. Thy word is truth."

Among the truths, which are essential to the system of the Gospel, those, which together constitute the character of Christ, are undoubtedly of primary importance. "If ye believe not that I am he," says our Saviour to the Jews, "ye shall die in your sins." "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already." "Whoso believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God."

To believe in Christ is undoubtedly to believe in his true character; his nature, his offices, and his actions. In other words, it is to believe that he is what he really is, that he has done what he has really done, and that he has said what he has really said. All this, so far as it can be known by us, or be an object of our faith, is declared in the Scriptures. To believe, then, in the declarations of Scripture concerning Christ is to believe in his character, offices, and actions. But to believe the

declarations of the Scripture is to believe their true meaning; for the words, independently of their meaning, are nothing: and, if we substitute a meaning for the true one; we believe not the Scriptures, but ourselves; not *their* meaning, but *our own*; not a declaration of God, but a declaration of man, put in its place. To believe in the true meaning of the Scriptural declarations concerning Christ is, then, to believe the true character, offices, and actions, of Christ.

What this meaning is in most cases cannot be lawfully, nor innocently, mistaken. In almost all instances these declarations were addressed to the great body of mankind, and were intended to be understood by them. They are written, *not in words, which man's wisdom teacheth, but in words, which the Holy Ghost teacheth*; and, therefore, the best of all words. Hence it is certain, that their obvious meaning is the true one, for these plain and unanswerable reasons: that those, to whom they are addressed, cannot possibly find out any other; and it is equally impossible that God should have so written his word, as that those, to whom it is especially addressed, should, when faithfully employed in examining it, be necessarily perplexed, and deceived.

When, therefore, we find these declarations in the Scriptures: "Christ is God over all things, and blessed forever;" "This is the true God, and eternal life;" "He is the propitiation for our sins;" we cannot innocently refuse to believe, that he is the propitiation for our sins; the true God, and God over all things. These things are plainly a part, and an essential part, of the character, and offices, of Christ; and to believe them is essential to the faith, by which we must be saved.

It is not intended here, that the simple assent of the understanding to these or to any other propositions, is the saving faith of the Gospel. "With the heart," and with the heart only, I am well aware, that "man believeth unto righteousness." But the belief which I have specified is essential to that of the heart, and to the righteousness, of which it is the source. "The words, which I speak unto you," saith our Saviour, "they are spirit, and they are life."

What is true of the declarations, which I have mentioned, is equally true of many others. It will be easily seen to be impossible for me, on this occasion, to enlarge upon them. I will, how-

ever, barely recite a few. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh: that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." "A man is not justified by works of law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that, not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

All these declarations carry their own importance with them. All of them have an obvious meaning. In that meaning we are bound to receive them. If we do not, we certainly do not receive the Gospel: for the declarations, which I have recited, are the substance of the Gospel.

To give a strong example of the contrary mode of managing with the Scriptures, *Mr. Belsham*, one of the principal Unitarians in *Great Britain*, says, that "Christ, after having given sufficient proofs of his resurrection, was in a miraculous manner withdrawn from their society: which is described as an ascension into heaven:" and again, "Jesus is indeed now alive; but we are totally ignorant of the place, where he resides, and of the occupations, in which he is engaged." *St. Mark*, however, says, "After the Lord had spoken" unto the apostles, "he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." *St. Peter* says of him, "Whom the heaven must receive, until the times of the restitution of all things:" *St. Paul*, that, "when Christ had by himself purged our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Christ says of himself, "I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." *St. Paul* says, that one of his employments is to *uphold all things by the word of his power*; another, to *be over all things*, or universally to rule. *St. John* says, that one of his occupations is to *smite the nations for their sins*; another, to *rule them with a rod of iron*; another, to *be the light of heaven*, or the great source of knowledge to its inhabitants; another, to *feed his children with the bread of life*, and to *lead them unto fountains of living waters*.

Now it is plain from the words of *Mr. Belsham*, which have been recited, that he believed none of these Scriptural declarations in their obvious meaning: a meaning as obvious, let it be observed, as that of any words in any language whatever; a meaning so obvious, that it cannot be rejected without a violence, done by no sober commentator to any other book. To believe, as *Mr. Belsham* believes, is not to believe the Scriptures, but himself. The Scriptures actually tell us *where Jesus is, and what are his occupations*; that he ascended into heaven; that he resides in heaven; that he sits at the right hand of God on the throne of the Universe; that he will continue there till the times of the restitution of all things; that he upholds all things; that he rules all things, and performs whatever else I have recited from the Sacred canon.

I have elsewhere shown, that a profession of religion is an important duty of Christians. In such a profession these essential doctrines of the Scriptures are included. The whole amount of any profession is no other than *a solemn declaration of our faith in the Scriptural doctrines, and our design to obey them*. Without a profession of the doctrines, therefore, our design to obey them cannot be disclosed, or professed; because it cannot be known what are the doctrines, which we intend to obey. In this case our profession will of course be radically defective. *St. John* accordingly speaks of professing our belief in the character of Christ as being the whole amount of our duty in this respect. "Every spirit, that confesseth, that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God." And again, "Whosoever shall confess, that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." On the contrary, "He that confesseth not, that Jesus is come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

To *confess*, or *profess*, our belief, that *Christ came in the flesh* is to confess, that he voluntarily assumed the flesh, or the nature of man; and that, therefore, he existed before he took upon him this nature. The declaration is exactly equivalent to that of *St. Paul*, "Verily he took not on him the nature of Angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." This is perfectly evident

from the absurdity of applying this phraseology to a man. To say that *Adam, Abraham, or Moses, came in the flesh* would be to utter unintelligible nonsense. But to say this of Christ is the same as to say, that, *being in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, he emptied himself; taking upon himself the form of a servant, and being born in the likeness of men.*

To profess our belief, that Christ is the Son of God is to confess, that he is all, which this phraseology is customarily employed in the Scriptures to denote. That he is the brightness of his glory, the *Χαρακτηρὸς ὑποστάσεως*, the exact counterpart of his substance; That *he upholds all things by the word of his power*; That *by himself he purged our sins*; and that *he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.* Of him, that makes such a profession, St. John says, "God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

It will be remembered, that the English words, *profess*, and *confess*, are translations of the same word, *ομολογῶ*.

2dly. *A good profession of the Christian Religion is, also, a profession of the Christian character.*

The christian character consists of *those affections, and that conduct, which constitute what is called vital Religion*: in other words, obedience of the heart, and conformity of the life, to the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel.

It is plainly to no purpose, which will finally be useful to ourselves, that we believe, in the most undoubting speculative manner, the doctrines of Revelation; or that we profess this belief before mankind, even with absolute sincerity, if we stop here; if these doctrines have no practical influence on our hearts, and lives. The religion of the heart and life, is that, and that only, which answers the demands of the Gospel. "Then," says Christ, "are ye my disciples indeed, if ye continue in my word," John viii. 31. And again. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples," John xv. 8. And again. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is, that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him," John xiv. 21. And again. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you," John xv. 14. Passages

to the same purpose are found every where throughout the Scriptures. The whole tenour of them all is to prove, that *he who heareth the sayings of Christ, and doeth them, builds upon a rock, and shall never be moved; and that he, who heareth these sayings, and doeth them not, builds upon the sand, and shall be finally overthrown with an irremediable destruction.*

In a good profession of Christianity it is indispensable, that the character, which we profess, should be Evangelical: that is, the things professed should all be such, as are unfolded, and required, in the Gospel, as the true and proper character of Christians. In addition to the system of truths, which we declare ourselves to believe, it is indispensable, that we profess also their influence on our hearts, and lives. No other character is in the Gospel unfolded, and required, as that of the Christian. “If any be a hearer of the word,” says *St. James*, “and not a doer, he is like unto a man, beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he, being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” No other religion but this is vital. “This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments:” and there is no love of God, where his commandments are not kept.

It has heretofore been supposed, that *Visible Christianity* was all, which it was necessary to profess in this solemn transaction. By visible christianity is intended *an external conformity to the precepts and ordinances of the Gospel*; the mere outside, the mere garb, of real christianity. This opinion was probably derived from another; viz. that the *Sacraments are ordinances of conversion, and not merely of edification*. It seems difficult to conceive how either should have been adopted by an intelligent reader of the Scriptures; since, evidently, they do not support it even in a distant manner. As this opinion is very generally excluded from the present system of doctrines, held in this country, it will be unnecessary to discuss it here. I shall only observe therefore, that, as the members of the churches, addressed by the Apostles in their several Epistles, are uniformly styled *saints, called, chosen, faithful, sanctified, justified, beloved of God, brethren of Christ*.

members of his body, and by many other equivalent expressions; there can be no rational doubt, that the members of all other churches ought to possess the character, denoted by this phraseology, and that the religion which they profess ought to be the vital religion of the Gospel.

The christian character, or the vital religion of the Gospel, is in substance made up of *Repentance, Faith, and Holiness*. These must be all evangelical. The repentance must be a real hatred of sin; a real loathing of our own sinful character; an ingenuous and godly sorrow, that we have offended God, violated his law, and abused his grace; a sincere intention to live a life of new obedience; a real conversion of soul to God; and an earnest desire to walk blamelessly in all his ordinances and commandments; accompanied by a voluntary confession of our guilt, and a humble supplication for forgiveness.

The faith, professed here, is widely different from that speculative belief of the doctrines, contained in the Scriptures, on which I have so largely insisted under the first head of this discourse: The faith, of which I now speak, is an affectionate confidence in God; and peculiarly in the Redeemer; as the only Saviour, the only propitiation for sin, the only intercessor for sinners. To the belief of the understanding it adds the affection of the heart; and with exact precision is styled *trust* or *confidence*; by the former of which names it is extensively designated in the Scriptures. This is what is appropriately called *Evangelical, or Justifying faith*; and by every good man is exercised towards all the doctrines, precepts, promises, and invitations, of the sacred canon, as well as toward the offices of Christ, and the character of God.

Holiness is the love of God, and of mankind, disinterested, not selfish, love; the obedience of the two great commands of the moral law, together with that self-denial which it involves, styled by St. Paul the *denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts*; and a life conformed to the dictates of these principles, styled by the same Apostle, *living soberly, and righteously, and godly in the world*. These are the attributes, and these the actions, which form the christian character; the attributes of which we declare ourselves to be the subjects, the actions which we declare our sincere

and fixed intention to perform, when we make the good profession.

3dly. *A good profession involves Sincerity.*

By this it is intended, that, when we profess that we believe the doctrines of the Gospel, and sustain the character of Christians; *we should mean exactly what we say.* The reasonableness of this position will, I presume, not be questioned. No sober man will doubt, that God *desireth truth in the inward parts*; or that *he seeth, not as man seeth, but looketh on the heart.* On this subject I have conversed with a multitude of persons, offering themselves as candidates for admission into the Christian church; and, so far as I remember, not one of the number ever doubted at all the absolute obligation of making this profession with entire sincerity.

It has been the practice of some ministers, and churches, in this country to admit persons to a profession of Religion, *for the purpose of obtaining Baptism for their children.* In this case the professor entered into the same covenant, which was entered into by all others; engaging to *walk faithfully in all the commandments, and ordinances of the Lord.* Among these ordinances one of high import is *the Lord's supper.* Yet it was the professed intention of the candidate, at this very time, not to attend upon that ordinance. In addition to this, it was his declared apprehension that at the very time of making his profession he was not a Christian, and therefore was not at all disposed to walk in any of the commandments, or ordinances, of Christ. Glaring as this contradiction was, both ministers and people not only countenanced it, but contended for it with eagerness. Here, it is evident, the professor did not mean what he said. His sincerity was not that, which God requires. The service began, and ended, at the lips; and had no place in the heart.

It is not enough to constitute the sincerity in question, that in this transaction the candidate should be what in the technical divinity, in this country, has been styled *morally sincere*: that is, that *he should really desire to become a Christian.* If, indeed, he desires to be a Christian in one sense, a sense not very unfrequently intended, he is already a Christian: that is, if Christianity appears to his eye so lovely and excellent, that he desires it for its own

sake. If he desires to possess the attributes, and perform the actions, of a Christian, because the character seems delightful to his taste, he actually possesses the character, although he does not discern the fact. But this is not what is intended in the case before us. The candidate is here supposed to desire this character, only because of the blessings annexed to it. In other words, he desires to escape future punishment, and to obtain immortal life. But who does not desire these things? Who would not willingly be saved from perdition, and admitted to the blessings of heaven? If all were to be admitted to a profession of religion, who could make such a profession as this, the Church would literally include the whole race of Adam; and the profession would be summed up in this short sentence, "I wish to be saved." Happily, both these schemes have nearly vanished out of this State; and appear to be retiring fast from our country.

In the covenant, into which we enter when we make a profession of Christianity, we solemnly *vouch*, that is, publicly declare, *Jehovah to be our God, our Father, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier*. To make this declaration true, it is indispensable, that we really believe ourselves to have chosen God as our God; as our Sovereign, whom we sincerely intend to obey; as the object of our supreme love, reverence, and confidence; as our chief good, in whom, and from whom, we expect to find our present and eternal happiness. At the same time we declare our reliance on Christ for redemption, and on the Spirit of grace for sanctification. We also declare, that it is our sincere wish, and design, to *live now*, through the grace of God, and our real resolution, and engagement, to live hereafter, *soberly, righteously, and godly*, so long as we are *in the world*. I say, we declare these things, because, so far as I am informed, they are the substance of that profession of religion, which is generally required, and generally made, by the great body of Christians, with whom we are in communion, throughout our land. Now it is evident, that, if we do not believe any such wish, any such design, to exist in our minds; if we do not suppose ourselves to have formed such resolutions, and to enter into such engagements; we cannot honestly make these declarations; and have not that *truth in the inward parts*, which God certainly requires. If we have not chosen God as our God;

as our Father, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier; we cannot, with truth, avouch him to be our God. Of course, we cannot declare ourselves to be his children. In other words, we cannot make a good profession of the religion of the Gospel.

Let any candidate for admission into the church carefully read the covenant, in use throughout the great body of the churches, of our communion, in this country, and solemnly consider its import. If I am not deceived, he will then see, that, in order to mean in his profession of religion what the words of this covenant obviously signify, it is indispensably necessary for him to possess the views and affections of a Christian.

II. *I shall now inquire, what is that state of mind, in which a profession may be made.*

On this subject I observe,

1st. *It is evident, that, if we knew with certainty whether we were Christians or not, we could not conscientiously, or lawfully, make a profession of religion, unless we were Christians, in the Evangelical sense.*

In this case it would be perfectly known to us whether we could make the declarations, involved in a good profession, with sincerity, and according to their real meaning; or not. There could, therefore, be no doubt concerning our duty, and our qualifications, or our want of them, for performing it. Every man would then know, that he could, or that he could not, make a good profession; and by this knowledge his duty would be exactly pointed out.

But, as such knowledge is not in the possession of the candidate, nor, in my view, attainable by him, some further rule becomes absolutely necessary to direct us in this important concern. I observe, therefore,

2dly. *That the state of mind, in which a profession of religion may be lawfully, and Scripturally made, is a preponderating persuasion in our own minds, after a diligent and faithful examination of ourselves, that we can make this profession with the sincerity, which has been already described.*

God has required all men to make a profession of religion. The command is absolute; and the duty of making it, indispensable. At the same time he has required, that this profession

should be made with Christian sincerity. In neglecting to make this profession, in this manner, we are continually guilty of disobedience to a known command. It will be remembered, that the profession itself, and the manner of making it, are things equally obligatory.

As has been observed, Certainty, or *Knowledge*, concerning our ability to make this profession with the sincerity of Christians, is not attainable by us, when we become candidates for admission into the Church. But in every case of duty, where certainty is not attainable, we are bound to govern ourselves by *the commanding Probability*. Cases of this nature are innumerable; and constitute almost all those, in which we are concerned. There would never be a Minister of the Gospel, if all candidates for the Ministry were to defer their entrance into this office, until they knew with certainty, that they were qualified for the duties, which it involves. There would never be a communicant in the Christian Church, if all candidates for admission were to wait, until they knew with certainty their fitness to become members. Or if this language should be thought not precisely correct, it will be sufficient to say that very few persons would be found either in the church, or the ministry. But this most clearly does not at all accord with the intentions of God concerning the formation, and continuance, of the Church, and the Ministry, as expressed in the Scriptures; nor with the practice of Christ, and his Apostles, with respect to this subject. A single instance will be sufficient to elucidate this practice. St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, (2 Corinthians xiii. 5.) “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith. Prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves? how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” “How that Jesus Christ is among you, except ye be unapproved?” These *Corinthians* were admitted into the Church by the Apostle himself; and had all apparently given what *St. Peter* calls *the answer of a good conscience*, at their baptism. Yet *St. Paul* teaches us irresistibly, that, in their own view, *they were only probably Christians*; and might by a faithful examination find themselves *unapproved*. As *St. Paul*, under the influence of inspiration, admitted such persons into the Church; it is unquestionably right, that *every Minister* should do

the same. As such persons *then* made a profession of religion, under the direction of inspired men; it is certainly right, that the same persons should make the same profession *now*.

In this case, then, as in almost all others, we are to be governed by the commanding probability.

This I have styled *a preponderating persuasion, that we can make our profession with Christian sincerity*. But a mere preponderating persuasion is not enough to determine this point, of course. It is to be a preponderating persuasion in our own minds, *obtained by a diligent, and faithful examination*. It will then be properly asked, *What is a diligent, and faithful examination?*

To this question I answer,

In the first place, *That it consists in diligently searching the Scriptures for that information, concerning this subject, which they communicate*.

All the information, which mankind possess, or can possess, of *experimental religion*, is derived originally, and solely, from the Bible. To this fountain of instruction, therefore, every man must resort, who would learn, satisfactorily, how to answer the great question, whether he is a subject of religion, or not. What the Scriptures do not contain; what conclusions they do not warrant; stand, in this case, for nothing. To them, therefore, every inquirer must betake himself often, earnestly, and faithfully; that he may be able to decide, so far as it can be decided, this momentous question.

Secondly. *In examining with similar diligence other books, professedly written on experimental religion*.

Wise and good men have, in a variety of instances, collected with great industry, care, and faithfulness, the passages of Scripture, which especially relate to this subject; arranged them in such a manner, as to exhibit their connection with peculiar advantage; commented on them with skill, and success; and shown their real import with a felicity, unattainable by most other men, without the aid of *their labours*. To read these books is to read the Scriptures with an advantage, which we could not otherwise possess; and with a degree of intelligence, which we could not otherwise acquire. Here *the subject is presented by it-*

self; and without that connection with other Scriptural doctrines, which we so generally meet on the pages of the Bible; and therefore is seen more clearly, and more comprehensively, than it otherwise could be, by such minds as ours.

Thirdly. *It consists, also, in such frequent and careful conversation with wise and good men, as our circumstances may permit.*

Christians, who have had the benefit of extensive experience in practical religion, learn from that experience many truths of great importance, which can never be derived from mere speculation. These, for want of experience, must chiefly be unknown to the candidate; and even those, which he knows, will often appear to him in a dim and doubtful light, because they are *novelties*; about which his judgment is either not formed, or not settled. Not a little of the evidence, which he will find, of his own Christianity, and not a little of the comfort, which will flow from it, must be derived from the fact, that *his views, affections, and purposes, and the conduct to which they prompt, are similar to those of other Christians.* From this analogy, if it exist, he will gain instruction, comfort, hope, and peace, not easily attainable from any other source. At the same time these desirable Counsellors will discover to him his mistakes; lessen his false hopes, and false fears; and enable him in difficult cases to distinguish between natural and evangelical affections, between enthusiasm and piety.

Such counsellors are, to the inquirer, *living, practical Commentators* on the Scriptures; and will point out to him passages, of high importance to his case, which would otherwise escape his attention, and the meaning of such as, otherwise, he might have continued to misconstrue, perhaps through life. They will also learn from him the particulars of his own case; hear, and answer, the very questions, which he wishes to propose; consider, and remove, his peculiar difficulties; and enable him the better to judge of the whole subject, *not in the abstract only*, as he must find it in books, but *as it is immediately applicable to himself.* This is a most interesting benefit, which he cannot obtain from any other source.

Among these counsellors, *Ministers of the Gospel*, from their extensive intercourse with persons in these circumstances, and the

superior knowledge, which in this manner they scarcely fail to gain of experimental religion, *hold undoubtedly the first place.*

Fourthly. *It consists, also, in what is appropriately called Self-examination.*

After all that can be done by others; after all that can be gained from books, even from the Scriptures themselves; *the Application* of the whole mass of evidence, acquired by the candidate, must be made to his own case by himself. *This is the Task: here lies the difficulty.* Books, and other men, may furnish him a complete summary of the evidences of personal piety; and he may possess it without any material error: but they cannot make the application to his own case with such precision, as it demands. Books furnish it *only* in the abstract. Men, aided by his inquiries and representations, may *assist* him, while employed in making the application to himself. But after all, which they may have done, or can do, the principal labour will still remain; and this *he* must do.

That he may do it successfully, it will be indispensable, that he become acquainted with his own character. He must watch his views, affections, purposes, and life; must mark the motives, which he feels, and by which he is governed; the objects, on which he loves to dwell, and which he chooses to pursue; the persons, with whom he delights to converse, and whose characters he regards with complacency; the resolutions of reformation, which he forms, and the manner in which they are executed; and the progress, which, upon the whole, he appears to make. He must examine diligently, and, so far as may be, without partiality, the manner, in which he regards God; the Father, the Redeemer, the Holy Spirit; the Scriptures; the Sabbath; and the worship of the Sanctuary, the family, and the closet. He must inquire faithfully concerning his obedience to all the precepts of the Scriptures; particularly to those, which require of him the duties of piety, and self-denial; the estimation, in which he holds Christians; the estimation, in which he holds himself; his attachment to the world, to sense, and sin; his disposition to resist, or yield to, temptation; his spirituality; his views of heaven; his disposition to lay up his treasure in that glorious world, and to converse with the persons, and objects, found in its delightful

regions ; his love of justice, truth, and kindness ; his performance of the duties, which they require ; and his desire to become a blessing to those around him ; his zeal to promote the religion of the Gospel, and the salvation of men ; his humility ; his reliance on the righteousness of Christ for justification ; and his dependence on the free grace of God for pardon, acceptance, and eternal life. These may serve as specimens of the subjects, on which he is to dwell ; and out of which, he will find, if he should ultimately find it, a solid and evangelical hope, that he is a Christian.

Fifthly. *To all these must be added constant and fervent Prayer to God, to guide him aright.*

Prayer is the best single mode of self-examination. At the same time, nothing else will secure to us the guidance of our Maker. He, who would prosper in the great duty, which has been discussed, must ask faithfully, and fervently, for the immediate blessing of God upon all his endeavours : for without this blessing they will be in vain. It is not enough that we ask once, or twice, or thrice. We must ask continually. We must importune. We must wrestle. We must *pray always*, and never *faint*.

Such are the views, which I have formed concerning this most interesting subject. When it is remembered, that the covenant into which we enter, when we make a profession of religion, is in the Scriptures frequently *styled an Oath*, that it has all the obligation of an oath ; that the subject is the most important, and the transaction the most solemn, of all those, with which we are concerned on this side of the grave : I am persuaded, that my audience will confess the high import of the duty itself, and realize the indispensable necessity of performing it, whenever it is professedly performed, in a faithful and Evangelical manner.

SERMON XIII.

DANGER OF OPPOSING RELIGION.



ACTS v. 38, 39.

And now I say unto you: refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel, or this work, be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

THE story, of which these words are a part, is summarily the following.

After the remarkable deaths of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, and apparently through the solemnity, and alarm, diffused by these awful events throughout the multitudes, who were informed of it; many converts were added to the Lord by the miracles, and preaching, of the Apostles. Nor was the impression confined to the city of *Jerusalem*. A great number of persons from the neighbouring cities brought their diseased friends and neighbours to the Apostles. All these, together with such as were afflicted in the same manner, in *Jerusalem* itself, were healed. The agitation became general, and soon reached the *Sanhedrim*. The High priest accordingly, summoning this body together, composed chiefly of the licentious, opulent, and voluptuous sect of the *Saducees*, laid violent hands upon the Apostles, and put them into the common prison, where the vilest malefactors were confined. The Angel of the Lord, however, opened the prison doors by night; and, bringing them out, directed them to go into the temple, and preach the Gospel to the people of *Jerusalem*. They went, and preached, accordingly.

The next morning the High priest called together the great Council of the *Jews*; and sent the proper officers, to bring the Apostles before them. The officers went to the prison; but, not finding the Apostles, returned to the high priest, and told him, that they had found the prison shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the door; but that, when they had opened the door, they found no man within. This story alarmed the Council; and agitated their minds with a variety of doubts, and fears, concerning the event.

While they were in this situation, a person came, and told them, that the Apostles were in the temple, preaching to the people. Immediately they sent the officers again; and brought them; but without any violence, for fear of those, who had assembled to hear them.

When the Apostles came before the Council; the High priest imperiously asked them, "Did not we straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this name? and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." To this charge *Peter*, and his companions, firmly replied. "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers hath raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince, and a Saviour; for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things: and so is, also, the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."

By this information, *St. Luke* informs us; they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay their prisoners. But *Gamaliel*, a Pharisee, a doctor of the law, the instructor of *St. Paul*, and had in reputation among all the people, having commanded the Apostles to be sent out of the council chamber for a short time, addressed to his companions a series of observations, which persuaded them to dismiss their prisoners. They accordingly recalled them; and, having ordered them to be beaten in their presence, and charged them to preach no more in the name of Christ, they let them go.

The text is the conclusion of *Gamaliel's* address to the *Sanhedrim*; and is plainly the substance of the whole: the observations, preceding it, being little more than an introduction, and an

illustration, of the sentence, which it contains, and of the arguments, by which that sentence is here enforced.

The Apostles were vigorously employed in *preaching the Gospel, and in converting mankind to the religion of the cross*. To this work the *Sanhedrim* with an obstinate spirit of unbelief, and with the malevolence, always generated in the hearts of unbelievers, when seriously engaged in resisting Christianity, strenuously opposed themselves. They hated the Redeemer: they hated the Gospel, which he taught: they hated the religion, which the Gospel unfolded, and which it is the great means of spreading among mankind. So violent was their hatred, that they ordered the Apostles, for preaching this religion, to be beaten with rods before them in the senate chamber; forgetting their character, and shamelessly violating decency, as well as justice. Nor was this all. From the story of *St. Luke* it is evident, that they were on the point of imbruing their hands in the blood of these excellent men; as, a little time before, they had actually imbrued them in the blood of the Redeemer. At the same time, the Apostles had done nothing to provoke their resentment; nor interfered in any of their concerns. Nor could the high priest and his companions charge them with a single violation of any law, either *Jewish* or *Roman*.

The unreasonableness of this conduct is palpable; and it has accordingly been reprobated by men of sobriety in every christian age, and country, as being flagrantly opposed to every principle both of righteousness and humanity. We are not, however, to suppose, that it is at all uncommon. Christ foretold antecedently to his crucifixion, that such sufferings from their fellow-men were to constitute an important part of their allotments in the present world. "In the world," said he, "ye shall have tribulation." And again, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word, that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." What the Saviour thus taught to the Apostles, as their own desti-

nation, *they* taught their converts universally, as theirs. "All, that will live godly," says *St. Paul*, "shall suffer persecution."

In accordance with these declarations, both Christians and Christianity have been resisted by wicked men from the beginning: and the resistance has been dictated by the same hostility, with that, which was exhibited by the *Sanhedrim* at the time, when the text was uttered. Often has this spirit broken out into the most violent outrage. In the ten persecutions of the Church, carried on by the heathen emperors of Rome, and in those, which were subsequently inflicted upon the *Waldenses*, the *Hussites*, and the *Protestants*, by the papal empire, pride, malice, and cruelty, satiated their violence in all the modes of creating anguish and agony, which ingenuity could devise, or the arm of power execute: and the blood of the unhappy sufferers cried to heaven for vengeance in accents, which were heard, and answered. The heathen *Roman* empire was deluged with slaughter and misery; and the *papal* dominion has been overturned by judgments still more terrible, slaughter more extensive, and sufferings more multiplied, and more intense.

Under the influence of *Protestantism*, toleration has been better understood, and firmly established. The rack, the wheel, and the gibbet, have ceased to be instruments of conversion: and the spirits of good men no longer rise to heaven from the stake and the cross. Piety is neither immured in a dungeon, nor driven into exile. The christian may offer up the incense of his family, and the minister, that of his congregation, without trembling at the approach of a sheriff, or anticipating the horrors of a prison.

The hand has now delivered over this office to the tongue; and slander, ridicule, and derision, have in the work of persecution succeeded the scourge, and the faggot. The person of the christian is ordinarily safe: his property is safe: and the warfare is chiefly carried on against his good name, and the feelings of his heart. The gain, I acknowledge, is real, and important. But let not those, by whom the war is carried on, imagine, that, because they have been obliged to change their weapons, and with them their modes of attack, they have therefore changed their spirit. The spirit is still the same: not usually wrought up, I acknowledge, to the same violence and phrenzy; but possessing the same

malignant character; hostile to truth, to religion, to Christ, and to God.

It is a remarkable fact, that, whenever religion revives in any given place, and a considerable number of persons appear to be seeking the way to heaven, this enmity to it regularly revives also. The reason evidently is, that religion is at such seasons presented in a clearer and more striking manner to the view of its enemies. They see more distinctly what is its nature: and their opposition is awakened, just as the hostility of the human mind is always awakened by the sight of a foe. A sober man would naturally say to persons of this cast, "Why do you indulge this unkind, this malignant, disposition against these individuals? They certainly do you no harm. They are merely seeking their own salvation. Why should they not seek it? If you will not go with them to heaven; you ought reasonably to permit them to go. Their perdition can be of no use to you: for yours certainly will not be lightened by their participation."

To dissuade the members of the present assembly from the indulgence of this spirit is the design, with which I have chosen the text as the theme of the present discourse. It is my intention especially to apply it to the particular case, which I have last mentioned; and to engage those, who hear me, to shun all opposition to the revival, and prevalence, of Religion.

For this purpose I observe, in the

1st place, *That this spirit is exactly the same with that of the Sanhedrim.*

This truth hardly needs to be illustrated. Hatred, exercised by persons of the same character, is the same emotion, too obviously to admit of a doubt. Could we be at a loss; the effects, produced in both cases, are, to a great extent, exactly the same. The obloquy, contempt, and ridicule, thrown upon Christ and his Apostles, were in no respect different from the same things, as they are now dealt out to Christians. The *Jews*, to whom *Paul* addressed himself at *Rome*, said concerning the Christians of that time: "We know, that this Sect is every where spoken against." Then, indeed, the enemies of Religion were able to add violence to obloquy, and to torture the persons, and destroy the lives, of those whom they hated, as well as to wound their

good name. Were the same power in the hands of the modern enemies of Christianity; there is little reason to doubt, that they would employ it in a similar manner.

But there is probably not an individual of this character, who, whenever he reads the story of the *Jewish* High priests and their coadjutors, does not severely condemn them in his own thoughts for their hostility, and injustice, to Christ and his Apostles. But “thou art inexcusable, O man! whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself: for thou, that judgest, doest the same things:” the same in kind, though not in degree. He, who, from reading the history of crimes, particularly of injustice, and cruelty, does not learn to avoid them, but terminates his views merely in censuring others, while he practices the same iniquity, certainly reads in vain. Every such man, when he is opposing, and maligning, the religion of the Gospel, or those who profess it, or attempting to discourage others from professing it, ought to say within himself, “I am one of the progeny of *Caiaphas* and the *Jewish Sanhedrim*. I have the same spirit; and am engaged in the same work. All the censures, which I bestow upon them, ought, of course, to rebound upon myself.”

2dly. *Both the conduct, and character, of Gamaliel, as exhibited in the text, plainly merit the highest commendation.*

Probably no person ever read the story without yielding the most entire approbation to this distinguished man. The transaction was that of a moment: and the speech, which he made, is contained in four sentences. But he has gained more credit with succeeding ages than his compeers would have acquired by acting, as they really acted, during the years of *Methuselah*. This every one, who reads the story, knows. If, then, he does not cherish the same disposition, and act substantially in the same manner; he refuses to do what his own conscience testifies to be right, what he knows to be worthy and honourable. Thus he follows an example, which he condemns with unqualified reprobation; and refuses to copy what in the same unqualified manner he approves. How could he more severely condemn himself?

3dly. *This hostility, and all its malignant efforts, are unnecessary, and useless.*

“ If this counsel, or this work,” said *Gamaliel*, “ be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it.”

It is unnecessary, and useless, in the first place, *because Christianity, and Christians, will do no harm to men of this description.*

That Christians will not be active in doing injuries to such men, they themselves perfectly know. Such conduct would be directly contradictory to all their professions; to the precepts of the Scriptures; to the example of their Master, and his disciples; and to the behaviour of Christians at the present time. All these men perfectly understand; and feel, that they are absolutely safe from every injury, on the part of *Christians*.

Nor are they exposed to any injury from *Christianity*. All the purposes of Christianity towards those, who are not Christians, are fairly summed up in the address of *Moses* to his father in law. “ We are journeying unto the place, of which the Lord said, ‘ I will give it you.’ Come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.” That such is the true spirit of Christianity can be denied by no person, who reads the Gospel: and that such is the spirit of those, who profess themselves Christians, in the churches of this country, can no more be denied by any person, who examines their lives with a moderate share of attention, and candour. Here, certainly, there is no foundation laid for hostility, or hatred. Christians certainly believe, that Christianity is the first of all blessings, and the best of all characters. To wish, and to labour, that their fellow-men may possess this character, and obtain these blessings, is certainly benevolent, and amiable; and claims the utmost good will from all men. Even if they are deceived in this belief; they are, still, not the less amiable. The design is equally kind; and the disposition equally commendable. They may be pitied for their error; but they cannot without the grossest injustice be regarded with hatred.

Still less is there any room for animosity in the case, especially under consideration: *that, in which persons are merely seeking their own salvation.* That I should become a Christian, or seek to become a Christian, cannot possibly do any harm to my neigh-

bour's property, his reputation, his liberty, his life, his comfort, his family, or his future well-being. All these are absolutely unmolested by me; and are left just as they were before. My neighbour has, therefore, no cause to complain of me, or to regard me with ill will. His hatred, if he exercise it, is groundless, unprovoked, and incapable of justification.

Secondly. *If Christianity is a delusion; a mere mistake, or a mere contrivance; this opposition is unnecessary and useless, because the delusion will come to nothing of itself.* "If this counsel, or this work," said Gamaliel, "be of men, it will come to nought."

In this case nothing more can be necessary than a candid, fair exposure of the delusion, or the trick. Christians in this country are certainly as able to understand the force of arguments, as any other body of men; and in all other cases are as ready to yield to them. There is, therefore, no reason to believe, that they would not with equal readiness yield to them in this. To fair arguments there can never be a reasonable objection, let the doctrine argued against be what it may. Nor, if Christianity be a delusion, can there be a single reason to believe, that it is at all more incapable of being exposed, and disproved, than other delusions. A way is, therefore, perfectly open in this manner, in which religion may be effectually resisted, if resistance to it can be effectual. To this there can be no objection.

But all other modes of opposition to Christianity will be in vain. Hostility, in all the forms of persecution, slander, and ridicule, has been tried long, laboriously, and often, enough to convince the most incredulous mind, that it can never accomplish this work. Occasionally, it has checked the progress of Religion: at times it has driven it out of one city, and country, to another: and at times it has forced Christians to conceal themselves from the agents of oppression and cruelty. Usually, it has produced the contrary effects. *The blood of Martyrs* has been proverbially styled *the seed of the Church*: and a great part of the rulers of *Christendom* have become so entirely satisfied of this truth, that they have ceased from per-secuting their subjects on account of their religious opinions, or character.

Slander also, and ridicule, have been completely tried for the same purpose; and have failed equally with the cross, and the

faggot. Infidels have exhausted their contempt, their obloquy, and their wit, upon Christianity and Christians; but all to no purpose. The effort has been tried in many countries, for more than two centuries, and in every form, which their ingenuity could devise. Why should it be tried again? The experiment has certainly been made sufficiently to satisfy malignity itself, that the end can never be accomplished in this manner. Hatred may, indeed, be indulged again; but the hope of success can never be rationally entertained.

Thirdly. *If the religion of the Gospel is true; all opposition to it will certainly fail:—“but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it.”* Such was the sentence of *Gamaliel*: a sentence so obvious, that a sober man must be astonished to find, that it was ever doubted; and so solemn, that such a man must be scarcely less astonished, that it does not absolutely controul all human measures, relating to this subject.

Mankind never attempt to resist the circuit of the seasons; to force water up hill; to controul the clouds, the winds, or the waves. They never attempt to plough the rocks; to level the mountains; or to dry up the rivers. Why do they not attempt these things? It will be answered, “Because they are plain impossibilities.” If Christianity be the work of God; it will be equally impossible to prevent it from taking its own course, and from spreading as fast, and as far, as he pleases. Men can no more resist the hand of God in one case than in any other; in the moral, than in the physical world; in opposing the operations of his Spirit, than in controlling the winds, and the waves. With respect to all these things, and to all alike, the language of this great Being is, “I work; and who shall let it? My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” How delirious then must be every expectation of success in undertaking to resist Christianity, if the Gospel be true.

From these observations it is unanswerably evident, that all efforts of this nature must be foolish in the extreme, because they are so easily, and so certainly, foreseen to be fruitless. But this is not all. For, in the

4th place, *This opposition to Christianity is in the highest degree dangerous. “Lest haply ye be found fighting against God.”* Such

was the solemn warning of the distinguished man, who spoke in the text to the *Jewish Sanhedrim*: a warning, published in the Scriptures, that it might be addressed to all other persons of the same dispositions, to whom the Bible should come; and that it might by them be beneficially applied to themselves.

The dangerous nature of this conduct may in some measure be learned from the following considerations.

In the first place.

Every person, who opposes the commencement, or the progress, of Religion in others, hardens his own heart.

All the hatred and contempt, which he indulges in this case, will rest ultimately upon the Religion of the Gospel. He may flatter himself, with many ingenious contrivances, that his hostility is directed only against *enthusiasm, extravagance, and superstition*; and thus may endeavour to find justification for his conduct. But he will learn in the end, and, if he would honestly examine his heart one hour, he would now learn, that his hatred, and his contempt, are both pointed against Christianity itself, and not against its counterfeits. It is hardly necessary to observe, that contempt and hatred, often indulged, become like all other passions habitual; and of course powerful, and obstinate. The enemies of Christianity, in all preceding ages, have become, regularly, more and more hostile, by all the successive exercises of their enmity. We read their history; and are amazed to see their hatred of men, who had done them no wrong; their unreasonableness; their cruelty; their renunciation of all human feelings; their adamant hardness of heart; and the infernal pleasure, with which they satiated themselves on the deplorable sufferings of unoffending Christians. Let us not be deceived. These men originally had hearts, as susceptible as ours. Their obduracy was the result of their conduct. They themselves rendered their hatred of Religion thus intense: they shut their own bowels against sympathy and tenderness.

No emotion so soon, so easily, or so insensibly, produces hardness of heart, as *Contempt*. He, who hates Religion, may cease to hate it; but who will ever become, who will ever think of becoming, what he despises? Contempt, whatever may be the person, or thing, towards which it is directed, always flatters us

with a strong sense of our own superiority in wisdom and goodness. To persuade us from indulging an emotion, so gratifying to our pride, is a Herculean, and ordinarily a hopeless, task. Accordingly, the Wisdom of God exclaims at the sight of these men: "How long will scorers delight in scorning; and fools hate knowledge?"

In this manner the opposers of Religion remove themselves far from it. "Hearken unto me," says God, "ye stout-hearted, who are far from righteousness." They hate it, they despise it, more and more; and thus make their situation continually more and more dangerous, until it becomes desperate. How melancholy an employment is this for a being, who is advancing daily towards the final judgment!

Secondly. *Every person of this character daily provokes the anger of God against himself.*

If the Gospel is true; the establishment of the religion, which it unfolds, is the chief end of all the works of God in this lower world. Christ himself says, "that he came to seek, and to save that which was lost." "There is joy in heaven," says the same glorious person, "over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance." Christ died, that sinners might become religious. The Spirit of grace came into the world to sanctify sinners, that they might become religious. When sinners become religious, all heaven rejoices.

Can it then be believed, that God can regard persons, who wantonly oppose religion in others, and endeavour with hatred and contempt, with slander and ridicule, to prevent them from becoming religious, in any other manner, than with indignation, and abhorrence. The *Jews*, notwithstanding their enormous guilt in crucifying their Saviour, would plainly have escaped the destruction, which overwhelmed their nation, if they had embraced the religion of the Gospel. This we know, because such of them, as did embrace it, actually escaped. Their rejection of Christianity, therefore, and the hostility, with which they opposed its progress, became the immediate cause of those wonderful miseries, which befell their nation; of that tremendous ruin, which our Saviour styles *such, as was not from the beginning of time; no, nor ever shall be.* Who, that reads the history of this unparalleled event,

and considers the influence, which enmity to religion had in producing it, can fail to tremble at the thought of being found in the same ranks with these miserable workers of iniquity?

There is, however, a consideration still more awful, if any thing can be more awful, than either of these, which have been mentioned. When the *Pharisees* charged our Saviour with *casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons*; after refuting this infatuated as well as impious suggestion, he subjoined to his arguments this terrible monition: "Wherefore, I say unto you, All manner of sin, and blasphemy, shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

The sin, specified in these declarations, is obviously singled out, as being alone in the list of human crimes, and as plainly standing far aloof from every other. "All manner of sin, and of blasphemy," says the Judge of the quick and the dead, "shall be forgiven unto men: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." All other sins are pardonable: this lies beyond the reach even of infinite mercy.

It is the peculiar office of the Holy Ghost *to sanctify man*; or, in other words, to awaken, convince, and renew the soul: that is, to communicate to it the religion of the Gospel. To resist the commencement, and the progress, of religion in our fellow-men is, therefore, to resist the agency of the Holy Ghost in his peculiar office. To speak evil of the commencement and progress of religion in the soul is to speak evil of the Holy Ghost; of his peculiar agency; of his appropriate character; of the great purpose, for which he came into the world. Of all purposes this is the most benevolent, the most glorious, the most godlike. It is no other, than to rescue an immense multitude of the human race from endless sin and death, and to raise them to immortal life and holiness. Compared with it, the creation of the whole material system is nothing. God, here, is seen in his most honourable, and most amiable, character; and is eminently jealous for his glory, and re-

gards all opposition made to him, while engaged in this most benevolent employment, with peculiar abhorrence.

I will not say, I do not feel that it can warrantably be said, neither do I believe, that *every degree of opposition* to this work of the divine Spirit amounts to the unpardonable sin; but that this sin is found somewhere in the progress of such resistance, and in some degree or other of this evil speaking, I see no reason to doubt. What is there, which can be called speaking against the Holy Ghost, if speaking against his peculiar, appropriate, official agency is not of this nature? The reason, why this crime cannot be forgiven, seems to be, that it is attacking, and insulting, God, when coming out to men on the kindest of all designs; with forgiveness, sanctification, and eternal life, in his hands; presenting himself in a character, singularly amiable, and glorious; and demanding of mankind their highest adoration, gratitude, and praise.

At the same time *it is doing the greatest injury, in our power, nay, the greatest of all possible injuries, to our fellow-men.* It is to fix them in obstinate and hopeless sin. It is to help them onward to perdition. It is to preclude them from the attainment of holiness. It is to rob them of an interest in the mercy of God. It is to shut them out of heaven. Compared with these things, what is it to plunder them of their estates by fraud, or of their lives by murder?

Let every person, then, who finds in himself the least disposition to enter upon this employment, tremble, lest *he be found fighting against God.* Let him shudder, lest he should even now be advancing, lest he should already have far advanced, towards the perpetration of that sin, for which there is no forgiveness. Let him remember, that his progress in this dreadful course may be real, rapid, and yet imperceptible to himself. Sinners are rarely sensible of the growth of their evil habits; and never, of the rapidity, with which they grow; nor of the guilt, which themselves incur by indulging them; nor of the danger, to which they are exposed. But neither the guilt, nor the danger, are on this account the less real, or the less to be dreaded. How would the most stout hearted person in this assembly tremble, if assured, that the sentence of final condemnation was already passed upon him; and that his perdition was sealed on this side of the grave!

At the same time, let those, who are awakened to solemn con-

sideration concerning *the things which belong to their peace*, and have begun to remember, that they have souls, which must either be saved, or lost, beware how they resist the merciful influence of the same divine Agent in rousing them to just thoughts about their condition, and a rational concern for their eternal well being. It is a fearful thing to oppose the Spirit of God, thus graciously employed to bring us to salvation. *God is not mocked*. If you forsake him, he will forsake you: and you have no right to believe, that he will ever return to you again. Keep before your eyes the parable of *the unclean spirit*, who, *after he had gone out of the man, and had wandered for a season in desert places, seeking rest and finding none, said to himself, "I will return to my house, whence I came out."* Accordingly he went, and *found it empty, swept, and garnished*. Then he took *seven other spirits, worse than himself, and entered with them into the soul of the miserable wretch, from whom he had been once cast out*. Well might our Saviour add this melancholy reflection, "*The last state of that man is worse than the first.*"

SERMON XIV.

ON REVIVALS OF RELIGION.



ISAIAH lx. 8.

Who are these, that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?

THESE words are a part of the most splendid Prophecy concerning the future glory of the Church, contained in the Scriptures. In the preceding chapter, the Prophet describes, in the most affecting terms, the miserable state of the Jewish nation, immediately before the coming of Christ; and the general corruption of the world, immediately before the Millennium. In the last mentioned period of declension, God is exhibited as inflicting exemplary vengeance upon the apostates, especially concerned in it; and then, as gloriously exerting his power, wisdom, and mercy, to save the world from absolute ruin. As a consequence of this united display of vengeance and mercy, it is declared, that *they shall fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. The enemy will indeed come in like a flood; but his exertions, however furious and formidable they may seem, will be in vain: for the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. The Redeemer also will come to Zion, and unto them that turn away ungodliness from Jacob.* Christ will appear in a peculiar manner to his church, and to his ministers, for their protection, encouragement, and success. The covenant, mentioned in the last verse of the chapter, will then be carried into complete execution. *The Spirit of God, and the Word of God, will no more depart from his children, nor from their children, throughout all succeeding generations.*

Enraptured with the prospect of these wonderful events, the Prophet hastens through the intervening ages on the wings of inspiration; and, stationing himself in the midst of the glorious scenes, which he had anticipated with wonder and delight, calls upon the church to *arise, and shine; her light being come, and the glory of the Lord being risen upon her.* *Darkness*, he informs her, *will*, indeed, at the moment of her approaching prosperity, *cover the earth, and thick darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon her, and his glory shall be seen upon her.* As an immediate effect of this peculiar manifestation of Christ to his church, he informs her, that *the Gentiles*, the innumerable inhabitants of this great world, *shall come to her light, and their kings to the brightness of her sun-rising.* The Prophet then directs her to *lift up her eyes round about*; i. e. to cast them over the whole horizon; and *to see.* "All they," he exclaims, "are now gathering themselves together; they come unto thee." This is the end, for which they assemble by one great and universal impulse, moving at once the whole family of *Adam*. Strangers as they have heretofore been, they have now become *sons and daughters*; and shall be *nursed, or carried*, as children, *at her side.*

Full of this astonishing event, so sudden, so momentous, the Prophet, continuing his strain of rapture, and addressing the church in the name of God, subjoins, " *Thou shalt fear, and overflow with joy; and thy heart shall be ruffled, and dilated. And the riches of the sea shall be poured in upon thee, when the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee. An inundation of camels shall cover thee: the dromedaries of Midian and Ephraim. All of them from Saba shall come: gold and frankincense shall they bear. And the praise of JEHOVAH shall they joyfully proclaim. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered unto thee: unto thee shall the rams of Nebaioth minister. They shall ascend with acceptance on my altar: and I will glorify the house of my glory."

These animals, it is to be observed, are exhibited as partaking of the same general impulse, and (instead of being compelled, as heretofore, to the place of sacrifice,) as voluntarily assembling

* Lowth's Translation.

themselves; taking by one common instinct the road to *Jerusalem*; and of their own accord ascending the altar of God. Amazed at this unexampled event, the Prophet casts his eyes beyond this multitude of voluntary offerings; and beholds a vast assembly of mankind, moving onward in the same direction, and pointing their course to the temple of JEHOVAH. At this wonderful sight, he exclaims, in the language of the text, “Who are these, that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?”

The question, “Who are these?” plainly indicates, that the persons, spoken of, were either *unknown*, or *unexpected*. They are said to *fly, as a cloud*. They were, of course, a vast multitude, and were *hastening eagerly to their place of destination*. They are said to *fly, as the doves to their windows*: and were, therefore, considered as *returning with a dove-like spirit to their final and proper residence*. As this is a prediction inspired by God himself; it will one day be certainly fulfilled.

From the text, thus introduced, I derive the following observations.

I. *At some future period, a vast Multitude of mankind will be gathered into the Church of Christ.*

II. *This multitude will, in a great measure, consist of such persons, as were not rationally expected to become Christians.*

III. *These persons will enter the Church, of their own accord, and with great earnestness of mind.*

IV. *They will possess a dove-like character.*

I. *At some future period, a vast Multitude of mankind will be gathered into the Church of Christ.*

Of the truth of this proposition there can be little doubt to him, who admits this chapter to be a part of divine Revelation. At its commencement, the Church is called upon to *arise and shine*; *her light being come, and the glory of the Lord being risen upon her*: and is informed, that *the Gentiles*, i. e. the great body of them; the mass of mankind, comprehended, in the *Jewish* language, under this name, *shall come to her light*; or as it is rendered by Bishop Lowth, *shall walk in her light*; and *their kings in the brightness of her sun-rising*: i. e. in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, or the moral light of the Saviour. In the 5th verse, the church is directed to *lift up her eyes round about, and*

to see: and is informed, that *all of them are gathering themselves together, and coming unto her.* Finally, it is declared, that they are become her *sons and daughters*, who are to be *carried, and fostered, as beloved children, at her side.*

This immense train is the subject of the text. The great world of men is the body, which *flying as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows*, occasioned the astonishment and rapture of the Prophet.

II. *This multitude will, in a great measure, consist of such persons, as were not rationally expected to become Christians.*

This truth is sufficiently indicated by the question in the text: a question, asked evidently with surprise and exclamation. "Who are these, that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" Why is this inquiry made? Evidently because those, to whom it is applied, were either unknown to the Prophet, or were unexpected by him. They cannot have been unknown; because he has before told us who they were. It was their character, therefore, which especially astonished his mind. Nor shall we wonder at this fact, if we consider the actual character of those, who are here exhibited as voluntarily hastening into the kingdom of Christ. They are *Heathen, Mohammedans, Votaries of the Greek and Romish superstitions, Jews, and Infidels.* All these have been bitter and persecuting enemies to Christ and his church. The Heathen, I acknowledge, did not, in many instances, even know him by name. Yet they always opposed his government, and redemption, so far as they were acquainted with them; refused to perform those acts of duty, which they understood; and obstinately and characteristically perpetrated the crimes, which he had forbidden. The rest knew, and rejected, him; hated his word, and his followers; were guilty of every sin; and neglected every duty. Well might the Prophet be astonished at the sight of such men, changed into disciples of the Redeemer. Were we to be alive at the time, and to be actual spectators of the event; should we not be amazed to see the *Jew*, with a heart hard as the nether millstone reacting the crucifixion of Christ by bitterly opposing his redemption, and a reprobate of eighteen hundred years, changed into a penitent, believing, meek, humble, disciple of the Redeemer? Should we not be astonish-

ed to behold the *Mohammedan*, lewd, revengeful, bigoted, and seeking a paradise of sensuality by external ablutions, pilgrimages to *Mecca*, and stupid veneration for the Author of the *Koran*, publicly professing the faith, which he had persecuted for more than twelve centuries, and mingling his anthems with those of the very Christians, whom he had so long laboured to exterminate with the sword? What emotions must it excite in us to see the disciple of *Brahma*, trained for four thousand years in principles and practices of stupidity, licentiousness and crime, and bound by indissoluble chains as a galley slave of superstition; the *Chinese*, the child of fraud and trick, a senseless votary of the Idol *Fo*, a mere mass of lust and brutishness; the *Caffre*, a human animal, raised but one degree above the verge of moral agency; the shrivelled inhabitant of *New Holland*; the sluggish native of *Kamschatka*; and the wolf-like *American* savage: all casting off their whole attire of sin and lust, of ignorance and frenzy, of fraud and revenge; and coming abroad, under the vernal influence of the Sun of heaven, in a new clothing of penitence, faith, and love? How wonderful a prospect would be presented to us by the conversion of the fool, who hath said in his heart, "There is no God;" and of the wretch, who had spent the whole of his preceding life in undermining the Scriptures, in laughing at the Saviour, and in labouring with all his powers to destroy Christianity? What a novel and delightful prospect will it be to see churches rise in the wastes of *Arabia*, and the forests of *Tartary*; on the savage shores of *Nootka*, and the burning sands of *Negroland*? How should we be startled to hear the enraptured songs of the Psalmist resounded by the precipices of *Imaus*; and the hymns of evangelical piety re-echoed by the cliffs of the *Andes*? The wilderness would, then indeed, blossom as the rose, and the desert be changed into the garden of God. Then the wolf would lie down with the lamb; the lion eat straw as the ox; the child play on the hole of the asp; and the weaned child on the den of the cockatrice.

III. *These persons will enter the church of their own accord, and with great earnestness of mind.*

All the declarations concerning them in the context, which relate to the subject, exhibit this truth in a decisive manner. The Prophet presents them to the church, and to us, as gathering

themselves together, to come unto her; and collecting all their treasures, to present them to her as a free-will offering. He describes them as spontaneously building up her walls; as cheerfully ministering to her necessity, and her comfort; as bowing themselves before her in humble confession of their former abuse; and as prostrating themselves at the soles of her feet, as an atonement for their opposition, injustice, and contempt. In the Text, also, they “fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows;” as bound homeward on a favourite undertaking; on an enterprize, which could not be delayed.

St. Paul informs us, that the future reception of the *Jews* into the church of Christ will be to the Gentiles *as life from the dead*. In other words, the Gentiles, roused by this great event, will, with one accord, awake from spiritual death to spiritual life; or, renouncing their former character of sin, will assume that of holiness, in a manner so extraordinary, as strongly to resemble the resurrection of the final day.

If we attentively consider the circumstances which will accompany this event, we cannot fail to discern, that the nature of the case lends the highest probability to the prediction. *The system of truth*, in the knowledge and obedience of which they will yield themselves to the Redeemer, is, to almost all these persons, unknown and unheard of. The views, which it will present to them at the time of their Conversion to God, will be new, strange, and surprising. It is a system, containing doctrines and precepts of unrivalled beauty, supreme excellence, and unexampled sublimity; doctrines and precepts, which Angels could not have devised, and which Angels will investigate with intense study and transport forever and ever. It is a system, which discloses all their duty to God, to themselves, and to their fellow-creatures. Finally, it is a system, which produces every virtue, communicates every comfort, and inspires every hope, found in the present life; and prepares them for endless improvement, exaltation and felicity, in the life to come.

The disposition, also, effectuated in them by the Spirit of Grace, under the influence of which they enter the Divine Kingdom, is a disposition, cheerfully acknowledging the truths, which they have imbibed, as the Word of God; realizing their own endless

interest in them all; and finding an entire delight in yielding to them perpetual obedience. It is a disposition, opening with an expansive benevolence, with a sublime friendship, to the various members of this delightful kingdom; rejoicing in their virtue and happiness; contributing, with vigorous efforts, to the advancement of both; and giving itself up to the contemplation, worship and enjoyment, of Infinite Perfection.

It is also to be remembered, that *they are beings, created anew*. Of rebels they have become children; of aliens they have become heirs; of outcasts they have become favourites of God; of nuisances to the universe they have become blessings. They are born into a new world; a world of light and glory, into which they have unexpectedly entered from a dungeon of sin, of darkness, and of woe. In a word, the doctrines and precepts imbibed, the character acquired, and the situation gained, are all such, as to fill the mind with the best thoughts, and the most delightful emotions; as to ennoble every faculty, and quicken every exertion. Who can doubt, that such men, so circumstanced, would manifest singular ardour of mind, when taking possession of blessings so numerous, and of such inestimable importance?

IV. *They will possess a dove-like character.*

The peculiar characteristics of the *Dove* are *harmlessness, gentleness, affection, and constancy*. Such are the attributes of those, who form this great assembly.

When the Spirit of Truth descended on Christ at his baptism, he assumed the visible form of a *dove*. In this manner he indicated his own character, and that of the Saviour, on whom he rested. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." The disposition of Christians is produced by the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost; partakes of his proper character; and is, therefore, throughout the Scriptures denominated *spiritual*. Accordingly, the meek and humble virtues are, every where in the sacred volume, presented to us as the peculiar characteristics of this disposition. Not heroism, not magnanimity, but *love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance*, are recited by *St. Paul*, as the peculiar fruits of the Spirit in the renovated mind.

It is the essential characteristic of Christians to have *the same*

mind, which was also in Christ, and to walk as he also walked. What was the predominating character of Christ? It was, as I remarked, beautifully imaged by the descent of the Spirit upon him *in the form of a dove*; and is every where described in the Scriptures, in exact conformity to this divine symbol. "Take my yoke upon you," says this glorious Person to the world of suffering sinners, "and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart." "Such an high priest," says *St. Paul*, "became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed his cause to Him that judgeth righteously." "He was led," saith the Prophet Isaiah, "as a lamb to the slaughter; and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened he not his mouth." Such is the character of the Redeemer, universally exhibited. The same character Christians are both commanded, and declared, to possess, in the sacred volume. Christ, when his apostles went out upon their first mission, directed them to *be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*. Of his church He says, "My sister, my dove, my undefiled, is but one." The Psalmist, also, in a prayer to God, says, "O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the wicked; forget not the congregation of thy poor forever."

This character is pre-eminently lovely. To be harmless, humble, meek, gentle, affectionate and faithful, is to be highly excellent, useful and praise-worthy. "The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," says *St. Peter*, "is in the sight of God of great price."

What a change must be wrought in the great body of mankind, before they can possess this distinguished excellence! What impure and proud hearts must they resign; what fierce and bloody passions must they overcome; what deceitful and fraudulent purposes must they renounce; what unjust and oppressive lives must they reform; in order to resemble doves; in order to resemble Christ? What a new face would this melancholy world of sin and sorrow wear, if inhabited by beings, instamped with this divine image of the Redeemer! How soon would tyranny and war; how soon would fraud and robbery; how soon would gambling houses and brothels; how soon would jails and gibbets;

vanish from the earth; and leave its face clear for peace and good neighbourhood; for piety and love; for gratitude and praise! Heaven would once more shine with pristine benignity upon the earth; paradise again blossom on its surface; and angels become, anew, the visitors of men.

REMARKS.

1st. *From these Observations it is evident, that there will, hereafter, be a general Revival of Religion in the world.*

The change, whose effects have been here described, will be no other than *a change from sin to holiness*. The only difference, made in the state of the world, at the time which is usually called the Millennium, will be accomplished merely by the prevalence of religion throughout the earth, and by the consequences, which religion draws in its train. The sole distinction in the character of *Adam*, before, and after, he became an apostate, was, that in the former case he was religious, and in the latter sinful. Eden was formed, and garnished, as the proper mansion of religious *Adam*. A world of thorns and briers, of toil and death, was fitted to be the residence of sinful *Adam*. If he had not sinned, paradise would have bloomed forever.

In a future, happier state of this world, mankind will universally become religious; and *fly as a cloud*, into the kingdom of Christ. Renewed by his Spirit, and transformed into his image, they will receive his doctrines and precepts, confide in his atonement, yield themselves to his government, and follow his example. All these, however, it is unnecessary to say, are nothing more, than merely to become subjects of his religion. The blessings, conferred on them at this period, however great, numerous or permanent, will only spring up as the proper consequences of this character.

Whenever men in considerable numbers become, within a short period, subjects of piety, *Religion* is, in customary language, said to have revived. *A Revival of Religion, therefore, means nothing more, than that multitudes, in a kind of concert, and within a little time, feel, and confess, its power.* Of course, the wonderful change in this world, at the commencement of the Millennium,

will be merely an universal Revival of Religion throughout the great family of *Adam*. As this, in unquestionable terms, is predicted by a Prophet of God; it will certainly come to pass.

2dly. *This Revival will furnish a solid foundation of joy to the Universe.*

It cannot but be a solid foundation of joy to the Universe to have even one of its inhabitants made better and happier. Whenever this change is extended to two, twenty, one thousand, or one million, the reasons for rejoicing are proportionally increased. At the period, which is the subject of this prophecy, an endless multitude of its inhabitants will be made wiser, better and happier, than before; and than, otherwise, they would be throughout eternity.

Rational minds are capable of being, indefinitely, the subjects of sin or holiness, and of misery or happiness, according to their own choice. If they choose sin; they choose with it misery, its inseparable companion. If they choose holiness; they ever find happiness, by its side. Piety, benevolence, and self-government, produce, by their own proper efficacy, blessings innumerable, both within and without us; and destroy the root, and stem, of bitterness, by whose fruits our minds are defiled, and our capacity for enjoyment converted into a mere cause of suffering.

Self-Government would annihilate, at once, all the evils of wrath, envy, malice, and revenge; of drunkenness, gluttony, lewdness, and sloth; together with their dreadful attendants, remorse, self-abhorrence, the fear of a future judgment, and the terrible alarms of an approaching retribution.

What blessings to others would the enlarged benevolence of the Gospel effectuate? How many quarrels and litigations, how many slanders and frauds, how many treacheries and seductions, how many oppressions and persecutions, how many wars and ravages, would it banish in a moment? How soon would the rack, the wheel, and the faggot, be buried; the prison moulder into dust; the gibbet cease to frown on the shrinking passenger; and the furnace kindle its flames no more for the victims of cruelty and pride.

Delighted with this prospect, Piety, bending the knee of devotion, lifting up her meek and humble eyes toward heaven, and

raising her hands to the Throne of Mercy, would call down upon the reviving world a shower of blessings from Him, who hath not said to the house of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain."

Such, my brethren, will hereafter be the actual state of things, before this earthly system shall be completed. All these horrors will hereafter cease. *The sword will one day be beaten into a plough-share, and the spear into a pruning-hook.* Trophies will one day rise no more on the bones of the vanquished, and laurels be nourished no more by the blood of man. Every land, like the land of promise, will be employed, not during a few, momentary national Festivals, but from age to age, in the worship of Jehovah; and no man shall desire, or invade, it, while the inhabitants go up to appear before the Lord.

Nor will the internal state of each nation be less safe, and happy. *Rulers, under the influence of this principle, will rule justly, and in the fear of God.* Of course *they will be beneficent as the light of the morning, even a morning without clouds; and as the clear shining of the sun after rain upon the tender herb of the field.* First in station, they will be first in worth; in virtue; in piety: and while they will cease to be a terror, because none will *do evil*, they will be *the praise of all*, because all will *do well*.

In towns and cities also, the Theatre will cease to entice, corrupt, and destroy, the thoughtless crowd of victims to sense and sin. The Brothel will no more hang out the sign of pollution, and perdition, to allure infatuated wretches into the path, *which goes down to the chambers of death.* The dram-shop will no longer solicit the surrender of reason, duty, and salvation, to drunkenness and brutality. Night will no more draw her great curtain over those felon sins, which, like spirits from the abyss, have hitherto haunted and terrified this miserable world.

In the family also, no drunken, lewd, or cruel husband; no false, abandoned wife; no rebellious, graceless, debauched child; will murder domestic peace, comfort, or hope; nor present the prospect of a relation, *dear and tenderly beloved*, ripening for the wrath to come. The morning will no more dawn; the evening will no more descend; the sabbath will no more return; without the return of the daily sacrifice, without the rising of sweet incense to the heavens.

The wretched, forsaken wanderer will then find a home. The heart of charity will be cold, and her hand closed, no more. Strangers, by this new, alchymical process, will be converted into neighbours, and enemies into friends.

In the place of all the sins, and horrors, of this dismal world, peace, descending from Heaven, will hush every tumult, and every storm. Joy will smile, and triumph, at her side : and love will scatter in her path unceasing and unnumbered blessings for all people.

The picture, which has here been drawn of this divine subject, is faint and faded, when compared with the colours, in which the prospect has been exhibited by the Evangelical Prophet. "Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee ; I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of Gentiles ; and shalt be fostered at the breast of kings. And thou shalt know, that I, the Lord, am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty one of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold ; and for iron I will bring silver ; and for wood brass ; and for stones iron : I will also make thine officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land ; wasting, nor destruction, within thy borders ; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy people also shall be all righteous : they shall inherit the land forever : the branch of my planting ; the work of my hands ; that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. I the Lord will hasten it in its time."

Is there not here, my brethren, a solid foundation of joy to every rational being ? In what do we, in what ought we, to rejoice, but in real, extensive, and permanent good. Here the good is all real ; exquisite ; diffused over the earth ; and extended through eternity. The world, no longer a world of sin, disgrace, and woe, becomes a world of virtue, glory, and happiness ; and is changed from a desert into a paradise. Its inhabitants re-

nounce their sin; escape from ruin; and are anew destined to never-ending improvement, exaltation, and transport.

3dly. From these observations it follows also that the same things are partially true of every Revival of Religion.

Every *Revival of Religion* is of the same nature with this great and general one: the difference between this and others being only in degree. Religion, at the present time, is less extended, and less vigorous, than it will be at the glorious era, which we have been contemplating. Still, so far as it actually exists, it is to be regarded with the same emotions. Every such Revival is, therefore, a solid foundation of joy to all the rational creatures of God.

There is joy in Heaven; in saints, in angels, and in God Himself; over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance. That benevolent and happy world experiences new sensations of delight, throughout all its extended regions, at the return of a single apostate. Every face wears a new smile of complacency; and every heart glows with an exquisite addition to its own immortal joys.

What then must be the texture of that mind, which, here on earth, is not warmed to rapture at the sight of a sinner, raised from death, and restored to life, virtue and happiness? How would you feel, my brethren, if you beheld the escape of the same man from a disease, which doomed him to languish and suffer while he lived; from an imprisonment in a dungeon whose doors were never opened, unless to yield its inhabitants to the gibbet; from slow sufferings on the rack, which were to terminate only in the grave? Would you not hail the marvellous return of health to the hopeless patient; of liberty, proclaimed to the wretched prisoner; and of ease, hope and safety, to the friendless, agonizing captive? Would you not rejoice in his joy; exult in his exultation; and mingle smiles and transports, with his?

How much nobler a cause of exultation is furnished by the conversion of a sinner to God? Before, he was an apostate; a rebel; an unbeliever; an outcast; fixed in immoveable sin, and condemned to hopeless ruin. But the apostate has become a

penitent; the infidel a disciple of Christ; the rebel a child of God; the out-cast an heir of the Universe. Sin shall no more regain its power over his mind. Virtue has ascended the throne; and will reign over him with a dominion, which shall increase and improve forever.

Do you claim to be regarded as patriots; and to love the prosperity of your country? And can you be indifferent to the well-being of a world? Shall angels smile, and glow, and join their songs of rapture, upon the salvation of a dying soul? And can men, the brethren of the ruined and redeemed captive, refuse to unite in the joy? Can earth be senseless, stupid and dead, at a sight, which moves all Heaven to its centre?

There are, my brethren; there are in this land; men, who oppose, decry, and ridicule, Revivals of Religion. Few, perhaps none, of these persons profess to direct their hostility against Religion. A Revival of Religion is, in their view, or at least in their declarations, false phraseology; and not descriptive of the fact, to which it is ordinarily applied. Enthusiasm, and Fanaticism, are the names, under which their opposition is carried on, and by the aid of which they appear to think it justifiable. Let me ask these persons; Are you sure, that this opinion is just? Have you any satisfactory evidence, that, in your designs, Enthusiasm, only, is aimed at; and that you intend no hostility against Religion itself? Should this be the fact; have you ascertained, that that, against which you contend, is, in the given case, not Religion, but Enthusiasm? He, who *may be found fighting against God*, ought, certainly, to be well assured, that a conflict, upon which he is about to enter, is not of this tremendous nature. Where there is a visible concern for the interests of the soul; where men are heard to ask, *what they shall do to be saved*; there is, certainly, the appearance of Religion: and, where there is the appearance, there may be the reality. Suppose then, that amid much Enthusiasm, and many delusions, there should be some real piety; that among multitudes, who in what is called a Revival of Religion are anxious about their salvation, a single man should become a genuine convert, and actually embrace the offers of eternal life. This, certainly, is supposing the least; and less,

probably, than the truth, in any case of this nature. Would not the salvation of this individual more than balance all the evils, which you apprehend from the Enthusiasm in question? This single man will escape from more evils, as may be shown with mathematical certainty, if the Scriptures are the Word of God, than have been suffered by the whole human race since the world began; and will enjoy more happiness, than has fallen to the lot of all the generations of men on this side of the grave. Would not the arrival even of this one man in the regions of immortality be a source of everlasting joy to the Church of the First-born? Who, unless animated with the spirit of a fiend, can fail to welcome the conversion, from which such glorious consequences will spring, with the most ardent feelings of gratulation!

Suppose your opposition should be successful. Suppose your arguments, your ridicule, or your influence, should discourage even one awakened, anxious man from pursuing the salvation of his soul. With what emotions will he regard you on his dying bed! With what feelings will he remember you amid the endless sufferings of perdition! What appearance must you make to the eye, what character must you sustain in the heart, of the religious parent, who beholds you labouring to destroy, who sees that you have finally destroyed, his beloved child; have cut off his hopes of life, and shut him out of heaven. Angels, if sorrow could find an entrance into their unspotted minds, would weep over this terrible catastrophe; and sackcloth shroud the world of immortal glory.

4thly. *These observations teach us, that we are bound faithfully to labour, and fervently to pray, for the Universal Revival of Religion.*

To do good is the only proper business of man: and there is no man, who is unable to do good. The good, here proposed, is the greatest which ever has been, or ever will be, done; in its nature exalted; in its duration boundless; in its consequences transporting. It demands, therefore, every wish, and every effort. To accomplish it is the first dictate of virtue; the business of angels; the employment of God himself. The man, who engages in this employment, although born of dust, and allied to

worms, is styled by the Scriptures a fellow-worker with God. How poor and pitiful, compared with this, is the office of kings, and the splendour of heroes.

In this employment every man can engage. Among the numerous modes, in which it can be usefully pursued, there is ample opportunity for the useful application of every mind, the exertion of every talent, and the employment of every possession. To him, who possesses the disposition of the Gospel, these assertions will require no proof. He, who cannot contribute, can labour: he, who cannot labour, can contribute: he, who can do neither, can pray; and can present before the eyes of his fellow-men the beauty, power, and persuasiveness, of an evangelical example. How few are there, who cannot do all these things? Advice, admonition, reproof, encouragement, and comfort, may every where be administered; and administered with a success and profit, which no mind can foresee, no tongue describe, and no numbers estimate.

Can we want motives to this employment? My brethren look into your own hearts, and hopes, and fears, and joys, and sorrows: and you will find them. Do you hope to be saved? Do you fear to be lost? At what price do you estimate this salvation? What would be a compensation for your final ruin? Have you calculated, can you calculate, the number and value of the mines, the crowns, the worlds, the systems, which might become a proper *exchange for the soul*? Of exactly the same value is every soul, which will be either saved, or lost.

Cast your eyes upon your families. You will there find these motives multiplied. Do you value the salvation of your Children? Do you ardently wish, when you appear at the last tribunal, to be able to say, "Lo here are we, and the children whom thou hast given us?" Do you form desires, which no language can express, of meeting your sons and daughters at the gate of heaven, and welcoming with transport their arrival in the regions of immortal life? Do you hope, with feelings unutterable, to mingle in that happy world hearts, and raptures, and praises, with your beloved offspring? If the universe were offered to you as a compensation for the loss of endless life to them, and as the price of their perdition; would you not regard the offer with a disdain,

and the author of it with a detestation, which language could not utter? Remember, that other children are equally dear to their parents; that their souls are equally precious; that their salvation is equally inestimable; and that their destruction will be equally dreadful. Whose children are you willing to see sent down to the world of woe?

Look to the apostles. Mark the toil, the self-denial, the suffering, which they underwent; the cheerfulness and perseverance, with which they sustained these evils. Who, among the vast family of Adam, ever laboured and suffered like *them*? For what did they labour and suffer? By the side of these disinterested and glorious men, serenely and cheerfully encountering toil, danger, persecution and death, to form disciples for Christ, and fill heaven with inhabitants, how do statesmen, kings, and conquerors, shrink, and wither, and fade from our sight.

Look to the Cross. Behold the Son of God nailed to the accursed tree, pouring out his blood, and giving up the ghost, that men might be saved! Shall Christ die, and will you refuse to labour, that your fellow-men may live forever!

Awake, then, to righteousness; to your obvious, unceasing, and most important duty. God has given you all that you are, and all that you possess. Your possessions are his: you are his. "All souls are mine. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts." *Render therefore to God the things that are God's.* Cheerfully as well as faithfully, perseveringly as well as patiently, devote your time, your talents, your property, and your efforts, to this divine purpose. Let no difficulty discourage, no opposition slacken, no passion hinder, and no obstacle prevent, your exertions. Extend them through life; and say from the heart, day by day, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

But it is not sufficient, that you labour. If you would find success, you must pray also. No good descends from heaven to this world, except as an answer to prayer. "Ask, and ye shall receive," is the great law, according to which all blessings are given. *Pray always with all prayer, and supplication of the Spirit, there-*

fore, for the restoration of mankind to the favour, and the service, of God. For this glorious end let the secret aspirations of the closet rise unceasingly to the throne of mercy. These let the morning and evening oblation of the household accompany, every day, to the presence of God ; and call down the life-giving influence of the Spirit of Grace upon this world of death and ruin. Finally, for the same delightful end let the sweet incense of the sanctuary ascend in one vast cloud to heaven, from sabbath to sabbath, as the united and acceptable offering of all, who love the Lord Jesus Christ, to Him, who *has not said to the house of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain."* Thus shall the millions of your fellow-men, *ransomed of the Lord, return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness ; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

SERMON XV.

CHRIST LOVES HIS CHILDREN UNTO THE END. SERMON I.



JOHN xiii. 1.

——— *Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

THE period, with which this chapter commences, is placed by judicious commentators immediately before the last passover, at which our Saviour was present. The declaration, made in the text, is intended, as I apprehend, to refer to all the events, and to all the discourses, contained in the subsequent parts of the book. By most of them it is directly illustrated; and by the whole, taken together, it is placed in the strongest light conceivable.

“Having loved,” that is, *having once begun* to love: indicating, that placing his affection was decisive with regard to its continuance; and that it was insusceptible of decay, or termination.

“His own, which were in the world.” This phraseology teaches us, that *they were his property*, chosen for himself, and destined to his use and service. All things are his: for they *were made by him, and for him*. But these were his in a peculiar manner; and are, here, intentionally distinguished, as standing in a nearer relation to him than any thing else which this world contains. His property in them is peculiar, both in kind and degree; and his interest in them of a superior nature.

At the same time they were still in the world; and were not numbered with those, who, being his own also, had ascended to heaven. The objects of his love, here specified, were not “the

spirits of just men made perfect." They were still, in greater or less degrees, sinners. They were sanctified only in part; and were but partially attached to him. They had many errors, many follies, and many faults, still remaining; and therefore many things to be blamed, and to be forgiven. Their disposition was at times alienated from his interest, and opposed to his precepts. At the best, it was imperfectly conformed to his pleasure. Even *the good, which they would, or wished to do, at times they did not*; and *the evil, which they would not, they often did*; because of the sin still remaining in them. He did not love them, therefore, merely on account of their personal worth, but with views, of a more exalted nature.

"He loved them unto the end." The end, here, may without violence be variously understood; and yet the application of the term be strictly just, as well as highly important.

From the text, thus briefly explained, I derive this doctrine:

Christ loves his children unto the end.

This doctrine I shall illustrate from *his Conduct towards his Apostles.*

Particularly,

1st. *He chose them out of the world.*

"Ye have not chosen me; but I have chosen you." John xv. 16.

They were, originally, like ourselves, miserable sinners. *In them, that is in their flesh*, as St. Paul testifies of himself, *dwelt no good thing*; nothing, which rendered them worthy and amiable in his sight; nothing, on which he could look with approbation. On the contrary, they were enemies to his character, cross, and kingdom. *They were in the world*, in the moral, or worst, sense: *the world, that lieth in wickedness*; but, as he informs them in the 16th Chapter, *he chose them out of the world.*

In the mean time, they were born of humble lineage, were educated in a very lowly and limited manner, and lived in obscurity and insignificance. It was therefore obvious, that they could be of no consequence to him. He could derive from them neither instruction, property, assistance, nor credit. It was of course impossible, that he should have chosen them for his own benefit. Whatever they were to do for him at any future period, it was

indispensable that he should enable them to do it. Their power, their wisdom, nay the very disposition with which they were to act, must all be derived from him. Even these, then, and the usefulness to which they gave birth, could be no original reasons why he chose them: for he could have given exactly the same attributes, and furnished exactly the same usefulness, to any others.

In choosing them, he covenanted with them, although they perhaps knew nothing of the fact, to supply all their wants; so far as should be necessary for his service, or their good. From this time he took their wants upon himself, and the supplies of them; their sins, and the atonement of them; their sufferings, and the necessary relief. A series of offices, infinitely necessary to them, and infinitely benevolent on his part, he now began; in which he displayed unlimited condescension, and in which through an interminable progress his love was to be more and more unfolded to them forever.

2dly. *In teaching them the doctrines and precepts of his Religion.*

The benevolent, and to them indispensable, office of an instructor he assumed from the beginning; and continued it until his ascension. Nay, he resumed it after this wonderful event; and, although he had finally left the world as a place of residence, he sent down his Spirit to dwell with them, to *guide them into all the truth*, and to *bring all things to their minds, whatsoever he had said to them, in the way of remembrance.*

In his instructions he began with the plainest and most obvious precepts, and such, as would least violate those, which without an abuse of language may, perhaps, be called honest *prejudices*. “I have many things,” he observed in Chapter xvi. 12, “to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” This rule he followed through his life; unfolding the truth as they were able to bear it, and wearing away, imperceptibly, one of their errors after another. When the disciples of *John* asked him, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft; but thy disciples fast not?” he replied, “No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment: for that, which is put in to fill it up, is taken from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out. and the

bottles perish. But men put new wine into new bottles ; and both are preserved." He found his disciples extremely ignorant ; slow of apprehension ; ready on every occasion to fall into gross mistakes ; and perpetually prone to return to their former prejudices. Like their countrymen, they expected a temporal Messiah : and, like them, hoped to obtain high offices in his kingdom. No instructions could eradicate this silly expectation from their minds until the day of *Pentecost*. They were, also, *slow of heart to believe* what he taught, and *what the prophets* taught before him. Often was he obliged to reprove them for their want of faith, and their reluctant belief of his own precepts. Yet he never reproached them ; he never ridiculed them ; he never exhibited to them a single specimen of unkindness. On the contrary he treated even their prejudices with tenderness ; and gave them " line upon line, and precept upon precept : " exhibiting himself in these respects as a glorious pattern for every succeeding instructor.

3dly. *He bore patiently with all their faults.*

These, as you well know, were numerous. They were committed in the face of his instructions, and in the face of his miracles. They were, therefore, direct testimonies of shameful unbelief ; and well merited severe reprehension. Yet, though they were often repeated, he never lost his equanimity, nor his tenderness. When *there arose a reasoning among them, which should be the greatest ;* instead of reproaching them for this foolish, contemptible pride, *he took a child, and set him by him ; and said unto them,* " Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me ; and whosoever receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me : for he that is least among you all, shall be great." When *Peter* had thrice denied him, and had mightily enhanced his wickedness by cursing and swearing ; how wonderfully gentle and affectionate was the reproof, administered to him by the Saviour ? " And the Lord turned," says *St. Luke*, " and looked upon Peter ; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord. how he had said unto him, ' Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.' " What an example is here furnished of patience and tenderness to us !

4thly. *The same spirit was strongly discovered in the action,*

which *St. John*, hath subjoined as an illustration of it, in the verses immediately following the text.

“Jesus, knowing,” says the Apostle, “that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that, he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples feet, and to wipe them with the towel, wherewith he was girded.” Remember that this was the Redeemer of mankind. Remember, that it was done with the consciousness, that *he came from God, and returned to God, and that the Father had put all things into his hand.* Call to mind the humble nature of the office itself. Forget not for whom it was done. They were poor peasants; of no consideration in the country where they lived. The office was the most lowly, which is customarily performed for man. He, who performed it, was great and glorious beyond a parallel.

In this act he presented them with a beautiful type of that internal cleansing, which he was just ready to procure for them by a far more humble, and immensely more self-denying, effort: pouring out his blood for them on the cross. Here, therefore, he held out to them an illustrious prediction of the unlimited humiliation, which he was about to undergo for their sakes; and the incomprehensible love, with which he was preparing to terminate his own life, that they might live forever.

All this, also, was done, not for himself; not even for his own convenience; but solely for them; to instruct them in their duty; to persuade them to the performance of it, and thus to become amiable and excellent in his sight. “After he had washed their feet,” says *St. John*, “and had taken his garments, and was set down again; he said unto them, “Know ye what I have done unto you? Ye call me Master, and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you. The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent, greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things; happy are ye, if ye do them.”

5thly. *The same disposition was eminently manifested in instituting, the same evening, the Lord's supper.*

In this ordinance his sufferings were exhibited in a new and most affecting light. Here the eye of faith saw, in clear, undeceiving vision, his cross erected; himself nailed to the accursed tree; his body broken; and his blood poured out; for the sins of men. Here in a record, written in letters of blood, destined to endure, unaltered, through all the ages of time, liable to no interpolation, and no loss, and capable of no misconstruction; was written *the love, stronger than death*, and triumphing over the grave; the love, which glowed in his bosom in the beginning, and which will burn with an intense flame forever and ever.

Equally manifested were his humility and condescension. *He supped with them; and they with him.* Humble as they were in their station and character, they sat at his table as his friends; and saw in this proof of his affection a rich earnest of their future glory. They were hereafter to be most honourably acknowledged as his friends. In the heavenly world they were to appear as the builders of his earthly house: and on the precious stones, which form the foundation of the *New Jerusalem*, were to be engraved in eternal characters *the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.* They were to be joint-heirs with him in the heavenly inheritance; his companions in everlasting joy; and kings and priests in his immortal Kingdom.

It was *a perpetual ordinance*; and in this manner indicated the perpetual and unchangeable nature of his love. His sufferings, and the spirit which lived and breathed in them, were always to be presented in the same manner to the eye of his children by the same sacred symbols. At the celebration of it he was always to be present; to sup with his children; to pity their weaknesses and follies; to feel their temptations and dangers; to forgive their sins; to heal their back-slidings; to *multiply* to them *grace, mercy, and peace*; and to take them by the hand, and lead them onward towards endless life.

It was *an universal ordinance*; to be celebrated in every country, and in every age, where christians should be found. In this fact was strongly imaged the universality of his love. The ordi-

nance is instituted for all men, the prince and the peasant, the Jew and the Gentile, the master and the slave; christians of the east and the west, the north and the south; of that age, and of all succeeding ages. To every one of these the love of the Redeemer is extended: and every one is loved exactly in the same manner, and with the same degree of tenderness, as if there were no other object of his Saviour's affection. To every one it is the love of a Saviour: love, which brought him down from heaven; which carried him through the sufferings of a persecuted life, and induced him patiently and serenely to ascend the cross.

Finally, *the time*, at which this ordinance was instituted, strongly illustrates the benevolence of the Redeemer. No season could have been equally interesting, useful, or proper. He was now going out of the world. He was to be delivered into the hands of sinners, condemned as a malefactor, and nailed to the cross. For these distressing events the Apostles were very ill prepared. Such a catastrophe of the Redeemer's life violated all their expectations. With some imperfect views of his true character they had united all the Jewish prejudices concerning the expected Messiah; and firmly believed, that he was to become a great and glorious, temporal prince; reigning over a vast empire with unprecedented splendour. In this empire they expected, without a doubt, to hold places of high distinction: and even on this very occasion, discouraging as it was, *disputed which of them should be raised to the highest distinction*. In direct contradiction to all this, he was to suffer an ignominious death, and be carried to the grave. Nothing could be more disheartening to men in such circumstances. Nothing could more entirely overwhelm them with distress, or bring them nearer to the borders of despair. All this he distinctly foresaw; and provided the necessary remedy. In this living, perpetual memorial he showed, in a manner unquestionable, that, though he was to die, his death was voluntary; foreseen by himself; chosen by himself; undergone, because it was a necessary part of the Providential system; and undergone *for them*. In this manner he proved, that he loved them with a love, superior to death itself; a love, which would warm his bosom, until he should again *come in the clouds of heaven with power, and great glory*.

6thly. *The same truth is gloriously evident in the Discourses, which he delivered after the institution of the Lord's Supper.*

These constitute the most wonderful part of the Sacred Canon ; and contain the most affecting sentiments, the most supporting consolations, which were ever made known in the present world. Moral sublimity is here raised to the highest pitch ; and, while it expands the thoughts, and elevates the conceptions, to the utmost, continually forces upon the mind a conviction that the things, intended in the several declarations, exceed its grasp, and rise beyond its utmost ken. Nothing could be so adapted to the circumstances of the Apostles, or those of afflicted Christians in every country, and in every period.

“Let not your heart be troubled:” says the compassionate Redeemer to them ; “Ye believe in God ; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go, to prepare a place for you. And, if I go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also.” He then declares, that, while they are in the world, he will not leave them hopeless, or comfortless ; that through his name they shall have access to all the blessings, which they need ; that he will send them *the Spirit of Truth*, whose name is the *Comforter*, who will enlighten, guide, support, sanctify, and save, them. He declares, that his Father will love them, and that he and his Father will dwell with them. Tribulations, it is true, await them in the world : and they will be called to encounter hatred, oppression and sorrow. These things, however, will, as sources of suffering, be momentary, and insignificant ; and will at the same time be means on the one hand of their purification and happiness, and on the other, of his glory. The world, he informs them, he has overcome. Peace, he declares, he leaves with them ; even his own peace ; the peace, in the enjoyment of which he has sustained all his trials, and with unchanging serenity met, and vanquished, all his enemies. If the world hate them ; it has also hated him : and they ought cheerfully to receive the same allotments, which were dispensed to him ; the Son of God, and his best Beloved : sameness of circumstances being, here, proof of sameness of character and evidence of similar approbation and love from God. Al-

though in appearance he leaves them for a time ; it is to lay down his life for their sakes, and to obtain for them the Spirit of grace : infinitely the best of all blessings. Although he leaves them for a time ; it is in appearance only : and he will soon manifest himself to them again. The Father, he assures them, loves him ; and hath put all things into his hands. From such a friend, invested with such possessions, no good therefore can be asked, or hoped, in vain.

Such is a very partial and imperfect summary of the divine consolations, communicated in the *three first* of these chapters. The *fourth* is a prayer, primarily for his Apostles, and generally for all his children to the end of the world : a prayer, fraught with sentiments more sublime, more noble, and more benevolent, than any other which the pen of man has been permitted to record. In this most wonderful discourse, Christ asserts his divine power and glory ; the infinity of his possessions ; and his unity, and equality, with the Father. He supplicates for them, also, all the blessings which they need ; declares, that he has kept them hitherto : and beseeches the Father to keep them hereafter. The glory, to which they are destined, he asserts, is the glory, which the Father had given him ; and declares it to be his pleasure, that they should hereafter be with him, and behold, and enjoy, his glory forever.

In this prayer we have, if I mistake not, the commencement of the intercession, which Christ makes for his children, *before the throne of the Majesty in the Heavens*. In the early part of it he asserts, that he had performed the great work of a Mediator, undertaken by him in the covenant of Redemption ; and on this ground claims the reward, which in that Covenant the Father had promised. “ Father,” said he, “ I have glorified thee on earth : I have finished the work, which thou gavest me to do. And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory, which I had with thee before ever the world was.” There can be no reasonable doubt, that of the same tenor is his eternal intercession in the heavens.

Of the same general nature and import were all *the actions of the Saviour*, which were subsequent to these discourses. At the commencement of his agony in the garden he directed them to

watch. Speedily after he left them, however, they fell asleep. Mark the gentleness of his reproof, when he returned, and found them asleep. "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing; but the flesh is weak." And when the band came up to take him, he provided, with the same tenderness, for their escape. "I have told you," said he, "that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." After his resurrection, while they disbelieved that he had risen; and, *when he stood in the midst of them*, instead of believing, *were terrified and affrighted, and supposed they had seen a spirit*; he again reprov'd them with the same inimitable tenderness. "And he said unto them, 'Why are ye troubled; and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands, and my feet; that it is I myself. Handle me, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.' And, when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet."

Finally, in the same manner, when *Thomas* refused to receive the testimony of the other Apostles concerning this great event, and declared that he would not believe without the evidence of his own sight and feeling; Jesus, having met them again, when *Thomas* was present, reprov'd the unbelieving Apostle with a kindness, and gentleness, which admit no parallel. "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they, who have not seen, and yet have believed."

After his ascension, he continued to exercise the same disposition towards them unto the end of their lives. When *Peter*, for example, was thrown into prison, and *bound between four quarters of soldiers*; he sent his angel, and smote off his chains; and delivered his faithful disciple from the merciless tyrant who sought his life. The emotions, which *Paul* felt concerning this subject, strongly illustrated to him by a thousand deliverances of his own, as well as by the whole tenor of the Gospel, may be best learned from his own mouth. "For this cause," says he. "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted, and grounded, in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height:

and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Such was the love, which Christ manifested to those who became his disciples in the first age of the Christian church. Of the same nature, exactly, is the love, which he exercises towards his children in every succeeding age of the world. In his intercession for his Apostles in the 17th Chapter of St. John, he said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, who shall believe on me through their word: that they may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory, which thou hast given me, I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one." What he prayed for in this place he has taken effectual care to accomplish. They have received the benefits of this intercession in every period of time: and the members of this church, if they are his real disciples, are now partakers of these benefits. He is *the same yesterday, to-day, and forever*; and in the constancy of his love to his apostles has gloriously evinced the constancy of his love to every Christian. "Lo!" said he to them, and through them to all his followers, "I am with you alway to the end of the world."

He hath chosen them in the same manner, in which he chose his Apostles. In the same manner has he renewed them by his Holy Spirit. In the same manner does he instruct them, and bear with them. For them also, as truly as for the Apostles, he instituted the Lord's Supper; and at every administration of it is present with them. "Where two, or three," said he, "are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The discourses, which he addressed to the apostles, he has caused to be written, and conveyed down, for the consolation of his faithful followers to the end of time: and they are addressed to *us*, in the same manner substantially, as to *Peter* and *John*. Nor is there a promise, which was made to them, as Christians, which is not also made to us in the same character. Of every Christian he takes the immediate and special charge: superintending with watchful care, and unlimited kindness, all his interests of soul and body, time and eternity. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," is the declaration, with which he commences his intercourse with the renewed mind: and he fulfils it exactly, until he has plac'd

that mind beyond the reach of every enemy, temptation and danger.

What is true of individual Christians is equally true of the Church at large. In the beginning he declared, that he founded his church *upon a rock, and that the gates of Hell, or rather of Hades, should not prevail against it.* The real meaning of this declaration is, that his church should never become extinct: and it has been exactly fulfilled to the present hour. There is now a church in the world. There has always been a church in the world. What prediction could have seemed more improbable, if we consider its feebleness at its first establishment; the humble, powerless character of its members, the power, numbers and violence, of its enemies; and the immense persecutions, which it suffered. This improbability is not lessened, when we remember, that its situation has been equally dangerous in many other successive periods. The church has always been surrounded by enemies. They have been numerous: they have been formidable. At times they have seemed entirely to prevail: and its faithful witnesses have been *slain in the streets* of its enemies. Still *they have risen again.* Immediately before the Reformation, the *Heavens were clothed with blackness, and sackcloth was made their covering.* At this moment *the day dawned, and the day star arose in the hearts* of millions. At the present time* a similar gloom has overspread the world. *There are voices, and thunders, and lightnings and a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth; so mighty an earthquake, and so great.* The cities of the nations fall; the islands flee away; and the mountains vanish. Still *God is the refuge and strength of his church; her very present help in trouble, God is in the midst of her; and she shall not be moved.* With a constant, parental hand; with the love, which he carried to the cross; the Redeemer watches over all her interests, and causes all things to work for her good. She may be *afflicted; but she will not be forsaken.* She may be *cast down, but she will not be destroyed.* He keeps her *in the hollow of his hand and as the apple of his eye.* "Can a woman," he cries, "forget her sucking child; that she should not have compassion on

* In the year 1812.

the fruit of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will not I forget thee.”

Finally, *Christ loves his children through Eternity.*

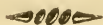
He does not forsake them in death. On a dying bed he speaks peace to their departing spirits: and his angels wait, to conduct them to *the bosom of Abraham*. Their bodies are then *sown* in their original *dishonour, weakness, and corruption, to be raised in incorruption, power, and glory.*

In the final day they will be raised with these splendours of immortality; and re-united to their minds, advanced in knowledge, and excellence, to absolute perfection. Then he will acquit them before the assembled universe; and confess them as his followers and friends. When the judgment is finished; he will convey them in triumph to heaven, and present them to *his Father, and their Father. to his God, and their God*, as the crown of his labours, his endless joy, and the objects of his eternal love. Then he will claim the unchangeable promise in the Covenant of Redemption, that *they should endure forever, and his dominion over them be as the days of heaven.* Then he will *make them kings, and priests unto God: and of the increase of their peace, and his kingdom, there will be no end.*

SERMON XVI.

CHRIST LOVES HIS CHILDREN UNTO THE END.

SERMON II.



JOHN xiii. 1.

— *Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

IN the preceding discourse I derived from these words the following doctrine :

Christ loves his children unto the end.

This doctrine I illustrated from the conduct of Christ to his Apostles : and observed that he manifested his love towards them, particularly,

1st. *In choosing them out of the world ;*

2dly. *In teaching them the doctrines and precepts of his Religion ;*

3dly. *In bearing patiently with all their faults ;*

4thly. *In the act of washing their feet, recited in the verses following the text ;*

5thly. *In instituting, the same evening, the Lord's supper ; and,*

6thly. *In the discourses, which he delivered after the institution of that Sacrament.*

I then observed, that the love, exercised towards his children in every age, is equally intense ; and endeavoured to illustrate this position from his declarations in the Scriptures, and from his conduct towards individual Christians, and towards the church.

I shall now derive from this interesting subject several Remarks ; intended to be means of improvement in the Christian character.

I. *How wonderful is the love of Christ.*

This subject may be advantageously illustrated under the following heads.

1st. *The love of Christ was Disinterested.*

“JEHOVAH,” said he, “possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old : while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there ; when he set a compass upon the face of the deep. When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment ; when he appointed the foundations of the earth ; Then was I by him, as one brought up with him : and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” “For by him,” saith *St. Paul*, “were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible ; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers ; all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things : and by him all things consist ; And he is the head of the body, the church ; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead ; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence ; For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.”

It is impossible, that he, of whom these things are said, should need any thing at the hands of any being whatever. If he wished to add worlds to his possessions ; he could create them with a word. If he wished to fill them with inhabitants ; they would spring up in endless myriads at his bidding. Heaven is his throne : the Universe is his empire : and all its virtuous inhabitants have from the beginning ascribed *blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and power, and might, and thanksgiving, to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever.* At the same time he *rejoiced alway before his Father ;* and was supremely happy in his boundless and eternal complacency. How evidently must he, of whom these things can be said, be removed far beyond the existence, and the possibility, of wanting any thing, which could contribute to his glory and happiness, from the hands of any creature whatever ?

But, whoever might be of importance to him, certainly men

were not. As we have nothing, but what we receive from him ; it is evident, that, if we should give him whatever we possess, we should barely return what he daily gives to us. Should we add ourselves to the oblation ; we should only add one more gift, of exactly the same nature : for ourselves also are absolutely his. This, however, is far from being all. We are not only his ; but we are of no value to him, unless as mere objects of his beneficence : not beings, which can do good to him, but objects, to which he may do good : not as things, valuable in themselves, but things, which he is able to make valuable by bestowing on them worth, foreign to their nature. Think how humble is our original, and our end. From the dust we sprang : to the dust we return. Worms, and mites, and minims, claim the same origin ; and are destined to the same end.

Remember, beyond this, the whole race of man were sinners : vile, polluted, and abominable, in his sight. Cast your eyes over the great world, which we inhabit ; and mark what an appearance its surface has exhibited, from the apostasy to the present time. See a great proportion of it, covered with idolatry ; and the inhabitants worshipping demons and brutes, stocks and stones, and absolutely forgetting, that there is such a being as JEHOVAH. See them rendering all their religious homage, and all their gratitude, to these infernal, or to these stupid, objects. See their worship a compound of fraud and falsehood, of lewdness and blood. See their doctrines a mass of folly and stupidity, at the appearance of which virtue sickens, and reason stands amazed. Mark their treatment of each other. What a train of unfilial, unparental, unfraternal, injuries, of frauds and thefts, of gross and monstrous impurities, of lies, slanders and perjuries, of quarrels and murders, it has regularly involved from the beginning. From these private scenes of guilt turn your eyes to scenes of a more public and general nature. Observe how great a part of the public business of man has been formed of the mere repression of crimes. How many jails and gibbets frown over the face of every civilized country ; and what a multitude of wretches are doomed to drag out life in the one, or to end it on the other. Ascend a degree higher ; and see sceptred Avarice *snatching on the right hand, and devouring on the left* ; spreading want. and woe, through

cities, provinces and countries ; and wrenching from the hand of poverty its last mite. To finish the prospect, behold Ambition laying waste the world ; and with fire, and sword, emptying earth of its inhabitants ; to secure the privilege, the birthright, of his kindred tigers, of roaming and ruling in a desert ; and to acquire the glory of having his name, indelibly written in characters of blood.

From such beings what advantage could this divine Agent expect ? In what manner could they contribute to his pleasure, or his praise ? Could such hands ever be employed in promoting his pleasure ? Could such tongues ever become vocal with his praise ? Had they all been blotted out of existence ; what chasm would have been made in his empire : what loss would he have experienced in his enjoyments ? When, therefore, we find, that in the full possession of *the glory, which he had with the Father before ever the world was, he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and that his delights were with the sons of men ;* we are irresistibly forced to the conclusion, that he was drawn to this object solely by his own good will. He saw, here, a vast multitude of immortal beings, who were *poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked.* He saw them lost in hopeless ruin ; outcasts from the divine kingdom ; and candidates only for perdition. *He saw, that there was no man, to stand between them and destruction ; and wondered that there was no intercessor, to plead for them. Then his own arm brought salvation to him ;* and the time was, indeed, a time of his love. To these guilty, wretched beings with a divine prescience he looked down the immeasurable vale of futurity ; and with a boundless compassion, awakened by their guilt and woe, determined to rescue them from these illimitable evils. In this prescience, and this determination, he became *the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world :* and the language of the church in the 63d chapter of Isaiah, addressed to him with exact propriety, was, “ Our Redeemer, from everlasting, was thy name.”*

To accomplish this salvation, an immense sacrifice was indispensable : the sacrifice of his own life, at the close of a train of singular sufferings. These sufferings he voluntarily took upon

* Isaiah lxiii. 16, Margin.

himself. This life he gave up in agonies. *His soul was made an offering for sin; and his body was carried to the grave. Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: but Christ commended his love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, he died for us.*

We are so accustomed to consider this subject *with reference to mankind at large*, that our conceptions are prone to be habitually general, cold, and unimpressive. My brethren, Christ died for just such beings, as you and me. For just such souls, as ours, he became a ransom. He died for the very beings, who have done all the wickedness, which I have summarily described above. The first trophy of his sacrifice, after his death, was a thief. To this wretched, polluted being he gave the wings of immortality; and on the same day, in which he entered the world of departed spirits, conducted him, as his own companion, to the paradise of God. What could this miserable wretch do for the Saviour of men, to prompt this glorious person to lay down his life upon the cross, that such a polluted creature might live? In this very transaction He lighted up a beacon *on the mountain of the Lord's house, established in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills*, to announce to all nations, that the path to heaven was, that day, opened to all men; and that guilt and shame would henceforth shut out none; not even those, whom the voice of penal justice had solemnly and truly declared to be unfit to live, in the present world.

What, I ask again, could such beings, as these, do for the Son of God; *his Elect, in whom his soul delighteth*? Nay, what, my brethren, could we ourselves do for this *possessor of heaven and earth*? What have we, that we have not received from him? Nay, what are we, that is even in our own view of any value, beside what he hath made us? Had he permitted us to return to our original nothing, or to go down to the regions of despair; how easily might he have filled our places with beings, in greater numbers, and possessed of minds unspeakably more pure, excellent, and amiable? beings, fitted to breathe the air, enjoy the life, and mingle in the praises, of immortality? But *such beings* could not be rescued from endless ruin. Over *them* his benevolence could not yearn for their deliverance from guilt; for they would not be guilty: nor weep at the sight of their approaching misery; for

they would not be destined to be miserable. It was his glory, as it was his delight, to be the friend of the friendless, and the helper of the helpless; to pardon the sinful, and cleanse the polluted; to open the door of heaven to faith, and hold out the golden sceptre to penitence; to relume with hope the eye of despair, and open a passage from the grave to the world of glory.

2dly. *The love of Christ is Universal.*

The love of Christ extends through all lands and ages. It reaches persons in every condition of life. The monarch is not above, the beggar is not below, it. The infant, expiring in the cradle, is not without its grasp; nor the hoary sinner, tottering on the brink of the tomb. It descended, like the dew of Eden, upon our first parents, speedily after their apostasy. It travelled down through the Antediluvian ages, until it entered the ark with *Noah* and his family, and accompanied them over the ocean of destruction to the mountains of *Ararat*. It wandered, as a pilgrim, with *Abraham*; and followed him from *Chaldea* to the land of Promise. It went down with *Jacob* and *Joseph* into *Egypt*; and returned again with *Moses* through the *Red Sea*, and the Wilderness, to the same sequestered ground. It dwelt with the Church in the *Shechinah* until the *Babylonish* captivity. With *Daniel* it entered the Lion's den; and to *Shadrach*, *Meshach*, and *Abednego*, in the caverns of the burning, fiery furnace, appeared with celestial splendour, in the form of the Son of God. With the Apostles it preached through the Roman world the glad tidings of great joy, which were announced to all people; and proclaimed glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men. From *Asia* it travelled into *Europe*: and even in the ages of darkness and superstition found the cottage of piety, and the cell of devotion, and sanctified them for its residence, amid a world of corruption. At the Reformation it lighted the flame of virtue on a thousand hills; and awakened hymns of transport, and praise, in all the vallies beneath them. From *Europe* it crossed the *Atlantic* with the little flock, which sought and found a refuge for piety in this immense wilderness; and smiled upon every sanctuary which they built, every church which they planted, and every sacrifice of prayer and praise which they offered up to God. With the missionaries, who run to and fro, to increas-

knowledge, it is now sailing back to *Asia* again, to shower its blessings upon regions, long accursed with drought and sterility.

In these vast regions of the globe, and during this immense progress of time, it has never failed to visit a house where it was welcomed, nor a heart in which it could find a residence. To the feeble it has regularly imparted strength; and to the doubting, confidence. To the solitary it has been the most delightful companion; and to the forsaken, the best of friends. The eye of despondency it has illumined with hope; and *caused the heart of sorrow to sing for joy*. Wherever it has appeared, *life and immortality* have sprung to light; and faith, repentance, and holiness, have become inmates of the breast. The heralds of salvation have proclaimed pardon, peace, and reconciliation with God: and the soul, lifting up its eyes, has, like the seer of *Patmos*, seen the *New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared, and adorned, as a bride for her husband*.

3dly. *The love of Christ is Unchangeable.*

Before our Saviour ascended after his crucifixion, he said to his Apostles, and through them to all, *that should believe on him through thir word*, "Lo, I am with you alway to the end of the world." That Christians might not be at a loss concerning the application of this promise to themselves, individually, *St. Paul*, quoting a promise of the same import, has taught every Christian to make it his own. "Be content," said he to the members of the Hebrew church, "with such things, as ye have: for he hath said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'" To make them perfectly assured of the safety of relying unlimitedly on this promise, he subjoins in the third verse, following, the proper character of the glorious Agent, who first uttered it, in this remarkable phraseology; "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." The promise, then, is unchangeable: and the love, by which it was dictated, is of the same unalterable nature. Accordingly we see this promise fulfilled in its entire import at the present hour. *The same Lord over all is now, as in every past age, rich unto all, that call upon him*. His providence preserves his Church *in the presence*, and in spite of the persecutions, *of her enemies*; and causes her *cup to run over with blessings*. He continues to Christians the word, and worship, of God; meets them

still in his house, and at his table; and communicates to them *the blessing, which descended originally upon Zion; even life forevermore.* Still his Spirit renews the soul of man; guides the wandering; restores the lost; directs the perplexed; binds up the broken-hearted; feeds those, *who hunger, and thirst, after righteousness;* and in all trials, dangers, and sufferings, administers *consolations, which are neither few, nor small.* With the same love, with which he ascended the cross, he watches over every one of his followers, however poor and humble, however ignorant and despised, with a heart that is never weary, with an eye that never sleeps. Not one of their number is forgotten: and at the final day the *name of every one will be found, written in the book of eternal life.*

4thly. The love of Christ is immeasurably Great.

“The love of Christ,” says *St. Paul,* “which passeth knowledge.” It is a *love,* which has proved itself to be *stronger than death;* a love which affliction could not *quench,* which sorrow could not *drown.* This is evident, with a lustre irresistible, in the things, which he has done; which he is doing; and which he will do hereafter. It is unnecessary for me to recall on this occasion *the things, which Christ has already done.* I need not exhibit him to you on the cross, pouring out his blood for the salvation of men; nor present him, agonizing in the garden of *Gethsemane;* nor follow him to the tomb. What must have been the intenseness of that benevolence, which could bring the Son of God from the throne of heaven, to shame and agony, to the cross and to the grave?

Less striking, I acknowledge, but scarcely less affecting, are the proofs of the same love *in what he is now doing.* There is something inexpressibly glorious to him, and beyond measure interesting to us, in beholding the Saviour of mankind, who *has ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things,* looking down, nay descending, from this stupendous greatness to the miserable world, which we inhabit, to blot out the transgressions, and wash away the stains, of a wretched sinner; to renew a polluted soul; to shed upon it *peace, passing all understanding;* to reunite it to the favour of God; to chase away its fears of future woe; to pour the balsam of life into its wounds; to illumine it with

the beams of hope ; to conduct it safely through the trials and dangers of this melancholy pilgrimage ; to bar the gates of perdition against its entrance ; and to open for its reception the door of endless life.

The same character will be still more illustriously manifested *in what he will do beyond the grave*. There he will *make his followers sons, and priests, and kings, to God*. In other words, he will bring them into the intimate relation of sons ; endow them with the sanctity of priests ; and raise them to the glory of Kings. As sons, they will love, and will serve, him throughout the ages of eternity with an intense and unalterable affection ; and be regarded by him with infinite tenderness and complacency. As priests, they will offer up from the altar of the mind the everlasting sacrifice of praise to their boundless benefactor. As kings, *they will live, and reign, with him forever and ever*.

5thly. *The love of Christ will be Eternal*.

The truth of this declaration is sufficiently evident from the last head. That, which does not change, is of course endless : and the importance of that which is endless, generally considered, need not now be explained. But there is one point of view, in which it may be useful to examine this subject, brief as the examination must be. The events of this life are interesting to us on account of their number and variety, as well as their nature. The nature of future events is generally, and perhaps I ought to say loosely, supposed to be important, as well as their duration. The Scriptures have every where spoken of them in exalted terms, and often in language of hyperbolical sublimity. Hence we are compelled to believe, or at least to imagine, that they must be important. Yet almost every where they are mentioned in phraseology so general, as to leave upon inattentive readers a faint and loose impression of their meaning. This impression has also been rendered more faint by the manner, in which this subject has been customarily handled by preachers. These, even when men of great respectability and worth, may, I suspect often, be fairly numbered, at least if we may be permitted to judge from their writings, among the inattentive readers of this part of the sacred oracles : for they certainly have done, in most instances, little more than to reiterate a few of the Scriptural exhibitions of this

subject, in language even more general, and far from being equally expressive. Little more is derived from most of them than that a future life is endless; free from sin and suffering; possessed of the favour of God; and fraught with love, gratitude, and praise, to him, friendship to his children, and a general state of high and uninterrupted enjoyment. I do not intend, that these things are not in themselves pre-eminently important. They are obviously of the highest importance. Still I insist, that, when holden out to the eye in this abstract manner, they strike it with little force; and leave behind them feeble impressions. To me it seems, that *to act in the service of God, and to communicate good to others*, constitutes, according to the Scriptures, one vast and glorious division of the celestial happiness, usually left out of view in discourses on this subject. To me it seems also, that both of what we are to be, and what we are to do, many more things are directly said, and those of a highly interesting nature, than have been customarily supposed. From these, when we compare them with diligence and attention, a great multitude of other things, deeply interesting, may be derived by irresistible inference: more, I suspect, than will ever be imagined by him, who has not seriously made the trial. To give a single example: those, who obtain immortal life, are said by our Saviour to be *ισαγγελοι*, *equal, or like, to Angels*. This one declaration opens to us a wide field of inquiry and conclusion; and assures us, that whatever Angels are, or do, or are exhibited as being, or doing, in the Scriptures, we also shall substantially be, or do. But the things, which Angels do, together with their attributes, and circumstances, are, as exhibited in the Scriptures, very numerous, and very great: and these irresistibly infer others, which are great and numerous also.

The number and variety of events, which make up our system, hardly strike our minds at all; and probably never enter the imagination of most men, even among Christians. Yet, if we read the Scriptures with attention, and believe what we read; we must clearly discern, that both the number and the variety are immense. The inhabitants of heaven *serve God day and night in his temple*. The services of those, who in this life fill up their duty, are certainly very numerous: and are so entirely varied,

that no two actions among them all are alike. How multiplied, then, must be the actions involved in a service, which might never interrupt; of a mind and a body, which are never wearied; and of an existence, which knows no end. That they are endlessly varied is unanswerably evident from the consideration, that no two beings in the creation, and no two events in the Providence, of God have been found exactly alike. Variety is a standing law of created existence, and providential dispensation; and throughout eternity will be the great means of disclosing to the intelligent universe the glorious thoughts, and purposes, treasured up from everlasting in the Omniscient mind.

Instead therefore of being, if I may be allowed the phraseology, the tame, dull, spiritless existence sometimes presented to us, immortal life is a state of intense energy, vast design, and vigorous action; in which to know and to love, to do and to enjoy, will form a combination of dignity, glory and happiness, transcending every earthly conception. All this, also, will expand, and rise, and improve, forever.

From these observations may be conjectured, very imperfectly indeed, some of the things, which Christ will do hereafter for the objects of his love. All, that I have alluded to; the attributes, the energy, the activity, the success, and the consequent enjoyment, he will give; and will give with a liberality, suited with the love, with which he hung upon the cross.

II. *These observations teach us the Earnestness, with which we should labour to glorify our Redeemer.*

Think for a moment of what Christ has done for us. What is there, of a desirable nature, which he has not done? Look at the body, the soul, and the exterior circumstances, of yourselves; and of every thing, which is hopeful or comfortable in either; and you will be compelled to say, "This is the gift of Christ." Look at sin and sorrow, at death and hell, and you will be obliged to say, "My deliverance from these incomprehensible evils Christ purchased with his own blood." Draw the curtains of eternity; and, while overpowered by the splendours of immortal life; you will be forced to exclaim, "These, also, are the *good and perfect gifts* of the same glorious person."

How evidently is all, which we can do to retribute this mighty benefactor, *nothing, less than nothing, and vanity?* Even this, although done in obedience to his pleasure, is, in the proper sense, in no wise *profitable to him.* *He is not served, as though he needed any thing; seeing he giveth unto all life, and breath, and all things.* *Though Israel, though we, should not be gathered, yet will he be glorious in the eyes of JEHOVAH.* Should we serve him to the uttermost of our power; the only good, which he will gain, will be that, which a virtuous parent enjoys in the character and behaviour of a dutiful child, formed to excellence by his own care, labour and expense; the pleasure of seeing that child virtuous and lovely. Of what materials must the child be composed, who would not exert all his faculties to give this pleasure to his parent? What must be the spirit of that man, who would not labour with all his powers thus to requite his Redeemer?

Do you inquire what you shall do, to accomplish this divine purpose? You cannot doubt that he, who died to expiate sin, must be earnestly desirous that you should hate your own sins; that you should mourn for them; that you should forsake them; that you should watch against temptation; that you should *abstain even from the appearance of evil;* that you should mortify those passions and appetites, which so frequently betray you into iniquity; that you should resist those enemies to him and yourselves, whose only employment it is to seduce you from your duty. He, who came from heaven in the character of a Saviour, and has done all the things mentioned in these discourses, to accomplish this salvation; He, who has in this manner infinitely merited your highest confidence; cannot but be pleased to see you confide in his righteousness, his intercession, his government, and his promises. He, who has laboured and suffered without a parallel to re-establish holiness in your minds, must be delighted to see this glorious end accomplished; to see you assume, improve, and brighten, this beauty of the mind, this divine excellence, this image of himself. How obviously will the gain of all these things be yours alone.

III. *These considerations forcibly impress upon us the duty of loving one another.*

This is the very inference of *St. John* from the great subject of the present discourse. "Beloved," says that amiable Apostle, "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

When a Christian looks round on his fellow-christians; he sees those, for whom Christ died; those who are united to himself in the same faith, and the same covenant; who are members of the same delightful family; who are fellow-travellers towards Heaven; who will be forever united with him in the friendship of that happy world; who are to share together in its immortal enjoyments; who are loved by Christ with a love, which admits no limits, and which will know no end. Shall not these persons love each other with an intense, unchanging, and everlasting love? How obviously are Christians bound and compelled by this great argument laboriously to promote each other's welfare, in all their progress through this vale of tears?

The good offices, which Christians are thus required to render to each other, are all pointed out to them, and enforced on their consciences, and on their hearts, by the example of Christ. He fed the hungry; healed the sick; released the prisoner; comforted the sorrowful; instructed, reprov'd, warn'd and edified, his followers; prayed for them earnestly and continually; set before them an example, *blameless, and harmless, and without rebuke*; and universally helped them onward towards eternal Life. These are the very things, which he requires Christians to do to each other; and in these he exhibited, while in the world, and in the gospel still exhibits, to his faithful followers his unspeakable love. Here we behold, *as in a glass, the glory of the Lord*. How desirable is it, that we should be *chang'd into the same image, and raised from excellence to excellence, and from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord?*

Christians have innumerable wants, which their fellow-christians are to supply; and many sufferings, which their fellow-christians are to relieve. They are poor; and need food and raiment, fuel, beds, and houses. They are sick; and need medicine, attendance, nurses, and physicians. They are in distress; and need relief. They are in sorrow; and need consolation. They are perplexed; and need to have their doubts removed. They are desponding; and powerfully claim to be cheer'd with

hope. Their ignorance calls irresistibly for instruction; their afflictions, for sympathy; and their dangers, for deliverance. They are slothful; and must be quickened. They are diffident; and must be encouraged. They love the world; and must be withdrawn from it. They are lukewarm; and must be animated. They backslide; and must be recalled to their duty.

What a field is here spread before the Christian for the exercise of his brotherly love! To labour in this field is the proper business, the professional employment, of every disciple of Christ. In this field what disciple will not labour willingly, vigorously, and without ceasing. Should any one find himself slothful, reluctant, discouraged, or weary; let him call to mind, that the service, which is proposed at any time, and in danger of being declined by him, beside being an act of brotherly love to a fellow-christian, is a service done to Christ himself. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me;" is the definitive sentence, pronounced by himself on every effort of this nature. Let every Christian call to mind, that every such effort, is intended to requite, so far as in his power, this divine benefactor for the immense blessing of eternal life: life, too, purchased by the death of the cross. Let him remember, that it is one of those works, according to which he will be judged; and that, therefore, it will be the means of superior glory to him in heaven, and of superior enjoyment throughout his immortal existence. If these considerations do not move him, his Religion has gone from home, or is buried in sleep.

IV. *By the same considerations we are strongly urged to love all men.*

"I say unto you," saith our Saviour in his sermon on the mount, "Love your enemies; bless them, that curse you; do good to them, that hate you; and pray for them, who despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father, who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust."

There is no example in the providence of God, in which his kindness to the evil and unthankful, or to those who ultimately become grateful and good, is shown with such intenseness and

splendour, as in the mediation of Christ, and the consequent mission of his Spirit. Here the example, the rule, and the motive, are all spread before us with a glory which is supreme, and an efficacy which will be eternal. The example and the rule are commensurate, and comprise men of all ages, countries and characters, so far as it may be in our power to render them any service. Where they lie beyond the reach of our active beneficence, we are bound to wish their prosperity, and to pray fervently for their welfare. The same good wishes, and the same fervent prayers, we are obliged to extend, also, to those who are included within this pale; and additionally to impart to them of our substance, to furnish them with our kind offices, and to set before them a blameless and beneficial example. These, therefore, are constituted by God the peculiar objects of our beneficence. Among them the first place belongs to *the household of faith*; the second, to all others to whom we have opportunities of doing good. The ways, in which this is to be done, are both in number and variety endless; and occur every day, and at every turn in the journey of life. Who the objects are, to whom it may be done, scarcely demands an inquiry. Should the question, however, be asked; the first answer is, "Those, to whom it can be done;" and the second, "Those, who most need it." Whether they be friends or enemies, neighbours or strangers, is of no moment. I do not mean, that we are under the same obligation to do the same good to all men, who are within our reach. We are bound, especially, to do good to our families, and friends; because God has placed this peculiarly in our power, and made it peculiarly our duty. But I mean, that, when an object of our beneficence is set before us in his providence, the good, which is in our power, is then to be done, so far as may consist with other duties of life; and *that*, whoever, and whatever, this object may be. Should it be asked, What are the good offices, which we are especially bound to perform? I answer, Those, which are most needed; and those, which we can render, consistently with superior duties. The providence of God will ordinarily point out both the duty, and the object of it; and that, in language, which, if we open our hearts, can scarcely be misconstrued: language, easily intelligible to him, who is willing to understand.

There is, however, one work of Christian charity, which is of pre-eminent importance; and always claims a superior place in our labours of benevolence. This is the great work, which Christ came to accomplish: the conversion of sinners. "Brethren," says *St. James*, "if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he, who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Who would not willingly labour in such an employment as this?

David, contemplating the greatness and all sufficiency of God, and his own absolute insufficiency, and moved at the same time by an ardent spirit of piety and beneficence, exclaimed, "My goodness," that is, my kindness, "extendeth not to thee, but to the saints, that are in the earth, and the excellent, in whom is all my delight." This eminent saint, under the influence of all his piety, and directed by Inspiration itself, perceived, that the important attribute of Kindness, forming so great a part of the sanctified character, could not reach heaven, but was to find its objects on earth. Christ has taught us, that *these objects are all men*. This he has taught in his instructions, and in his example; and in both, with the most vivid language, and the most constraining motives. To find these very objects, he came from Heaven. To teach this duty, and exert this beneficence, he preached the Gospel; wrought his glorious miracles; and ascended the Cross. In his miracles and in his preaching, in his life and in his death, he calls with infinite authority, and unlimited persuasion, to every one of his followers: "Go thou; and do likewise."

SERMON XVII.

ON BENEFICENCE.



ECCLESIASTES iii. 12.

I know, that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.

THE word *them*, in this verse, appears to refer to the works, spoken of in the preceding verse: the works of creation; or *the creatures, which God maketh from the beginning to the end*. In these, it is said, "there is no good, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life." The joy, which is here spoken of, is unquestionably joy in God, his works and his designs, sufficiently explained in Jeremiah ix. 23, 24. "Thus saith the Lord, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth. glory in this; that he understandeth, and knoweth, me; that I am the LORD, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight,' saith the LORD."

To do good may denote,

1. *To promote our own happiness.*
2. *To promote the happiness of our fellow-men.*
3. *To glorify our Creator, and to advance the prosperity of his kingdom.*

The declaration, made in the text, then, amounts to this:

That there is nothing good, i. e. useful, or valuable, in the Creation, so far as we are concerned, but that we rejoice in it; and in God the Author of it; and that we do good.

This, then, is implicitly asserted to be the end of our being : for if all the good, or profit, resulting from our connection with the Creation, be placed in this ; then this is the real purpose, the sole end, for which we were made. The following doctrine is, therefore, evidently contained in the words of the text : *To rejoice in God, and to do good, is the End, for which man was created.*

By the End, for which man was created, I intend the purpose, for which his life, faculties, and advantages, were given to him by his Maker.

The former of these subjects I shall not consider at the present time. Fruitful, interesting, and noble, as this theme of instruction is, it is impossible for me to do justice to it, even imperfectly, without consuming the time, which I have intentionally allotted to the latter. I shall, therefore, dismiss it with two or three summary observations.

1. Rejoicing in God supposes a diligent contemplation of both his works, and his word.

2. It supposes, also, that we derive from this contemplation a real knowledge of his true character.

3. That we delight in this character, so far as we understand it ; and, where we do not, that we regard it with a sincere and virtuous confidence.

4. Rejoicing in God, therefore, involves, either immediately or consequentially, all those affections, which are included under the general name of Piety.

All this is plainly but one way of doing good. Yet, as this phrase usually denotes that train of virtuous conduct, which immediately respects ourselves and our fellow-men ; particularly the latter ; I have separated these efforts of a virtuous mind, in order to make the subject more clearly understood.

Most men will probably confess, without much reluctance, or difficulty, that to do good to mankind is a primary end of our being. So many loose, general observations are continually made on this subject, which are favourable to the doctrine, that few persons would probably hesitate to join the train of those, by whom it seems to be both believed, and respected. It is to be feared, however, that the number of those, who realize either its truth, or importance, is much smaller, than of those, who adopt this

language. It is far from being true, that we believe every thing, which we suppose ourselves to believe; much less do we believe all, that we acknowledge to be true. A multitude of those propositions, which are familiarly asserted by mankind, particularly on moral subjects, and those, often, of the highest importance, have their seat only on the lips; and are nearly of that class, which logicians term *Verbal*. Many of these are uttered only for the sake of bearing a part in conversation; many others, out of complaisance to those around us, by whom they have been already adopted; and many more, because we wish to appear on that, which we suppose to be generally considered as the right, side. What is thus familiarly asserted, has, in most cases at least, never been understood, nor even examined, by the intellect; nor accorded with by the heart. It is certainly to be deeply regretted, that a subject of such immense importance, as that, which is the end of our being, should be regarded in a manner so loose; so indicative of ignorance, and stupidity; so unworthy of our rational nature; so mischievous to our present and eternal welfare. It is to be deeply regretted, that a subject of such moment should not be clearly comprehended, engross the affections, and control the energy of the mind. This discourse is intended to remove, so far as may be, the evil, of which I complain; and to convince those, who hear me, that the doctrine of the text is true, reasonable, and desirable.

The common apprehension of mankind concerning this subject is evidently this: that *they were made to enjoy life; to acquire good, rather than to do it*. This seems peculiarly to be the settled, and almost the only, belief of those, who are young. The period of youth is proverbially spoken of by all men as the season of enjoyment. It certainly cannot excite wonder, that what is so generally said should be believed by those, who are peculiarly interested in the declaration; by youths themselves. They are now in possession of this season; and have inclinations, at least sufficiently strong, to seize the happy moment, and devote their powers to the attainment of the pleasures, thus declared to be inwoven in their destiny.

Let us consider this opinion; and see what foundation it has in nature, and truth.

1st. *Does the state of the present world show, that enjoyment was intentionally the end, for which we were created?*

God, who made *us*, and the world, made both it and us, unquestionably, for some valuable end. It will not be doubted, that this end is, in the nature of the case, capable of being accomplished. If our enjoyment was this end; the whole state of things is undoubtedly so ordered, that its accomplishment is at least possible: for it cannot be believed, that God has constituted things in such a manner, as necessarily to prevent the accomplishment of his primary purpose in their creation. That he was able to bring to pass whatever he was pleased to propose cannot be doubted. If, therefore, this was his purpose; the means of its accomplishment are all certainly furnished; and may unquestionably be discerned by a candid, and thorough, investigation. The end itself, also, must, according to this supposition, have been actually answered; and have constituted at least the general course of things.

But has this scheme been at all verified by the actual progress of events in the present world? Let the common and constant language of men, on this subject, answer the question. How great a part of that, which is uttered and written, is an exposition or complaint, of disappointment, suffering, and sorrow! How customary in the mouth of man are these phrases: "This unhappy world;" "This miserable world;" "This suffering world;" "This melancholy world;" "This vale of tears!" How plainly has this been the language of every country, and every period of time! How continually have complaints of private unkindness, fraud, and violence, of the public oppressions and ravages of tyranny, of domestic slavery and public bondage, filled the mouths, and the books, of mankind! How often are neighbourhoods distracted by contention! How often are even families, the most endeared and the least unhappy societies, which can be found in the present world, wounded by the sins and follies of parents, the impiety of children, and their unworthy controversies and alienations! With how few intervals has war reigned and ravaged! Where is the nation, which has not bled? Where is the country, which has not been desolated? How often has the suffering become too intense for utterance; and been poured out only in sighs, and groans, and tears!

Look at the cradle ! Listen to the cries ; mark the agonies ; of the new-born infant ! Consider how many of our race are carried from this humble lodging to the grave. Follow an individual through the progress of life. Contemplate the pains, diseases, accidents, and disappointments, to which even the brilliant periods of childhood and youth are regularly exposed. Remember, that half mankind become victims to death, under five years of age. Ponder the toil, the weariness, the hunger, the thirst, the ignorance, the errors, the sufferings, from famine and pestilence, from fraud and disappointment, from obloquy and infamy, from hope deferred and fears realized, from the loss of children, and the pressure of poverty, which harass middle age. Fix your eyes upon the decays, the diseases, the pains, the shrivelled intellect, the puerile passions, the unsupplied wants, and the forgotten sufferings, of declining life. Approach the bed of death. Listen to the groans, consider the agonies, of expiring man. Look into the grave, the final home. Behold man laid in this lowly bed ; the prey of corruption, the feast of worms, and dissolving into his original dust.

When you have finished this solemn survey, tell me whether these objects are parts of a system, intended to produce enjoyment. Can you suppose, that God has intermingled these things in the constitution of a world of happiness ? If this was the end, for which he formed the present world ; has he not been most evidently, and wonderfully, disappointed ?

Turn now your contemplations to the same object again ; and consider it for a moment, not as a scene of enjoyment, but as a *state of trial* : a state, in which the characters of its inhabitants were to be proved, and decided ; a state, in which those characters were to be formed by their affections, and exhibited in their actions : a state, in which they were to show whether they would love, and do, that which is good, or that which is evil. Does not the whole face of things accord exactly with this scheme ; and evince, that such was the great end of our creation ? How obviously, how universally, are means of both these great courses of conduct presented to us every day : while we, as free agents, are left to ourselves to choose, and to do, either, as we please ? Does

not this view of the subject go far towards explaining the evils of life, and the reason of their existence? They here stand as monuments of God's hatred of sin; and as motives to deter us from doing evil, and to compel us to do good.

It is not my intention to deny, that the Author of our being has furnished, and therefore intended to furnish, us with many comforts; to sooth the sorrows of the present life; to blunt the thorns and briars, which so frequently wound us in our passage to the future world. As many blessings are, in my own view, communicated to our race, as would probably consist with proper expressions of God's anger against the iniquity of mankind: as many and as great, nay, if we may be allowed to judge from experience, more and greater, than are safe for man. We love the world, even now, more than our real interests would permit, or truth justify. If it were more replenished with the means of happiness; it is questionable whether heaven would not be totally disregarded, and eternity forgotten. Still, it presents afflictions enough, and more than enough, to compel the decision, that it was not designed, principally, as a place of enjoyment.

This, then, is the voice of God in his Creation, and providence. Let us proceed to inquire in what manner our Reason, in its investigation of the nature of this subject, will determine. For this purpose I ask,

2dly. *Is not the most good enjoyed, of course, where the most is done?*

Do not those manifestly live the happiest lives, who do the most good to each other? Does not this conduct make the happiest families, neighbourhoods, and nations? Concerning the two first of these classes there cannot, I presume, be a question. Concerning nations there would be as little doubt, were the public welfare more extensively the commanding object, and the individuals, who compose them, more devoted to this desirable employment. The position, however, is equally true concerning nations, as concerning families and neighbourhoods. Whenever those, who are possessed of extensive power to diffuse happiness, exert that power for this delightful end, happiness is always proportionally enjoyed by the public. The same truth may be also

advantageously illustrated by the consideration, that happiness is in this manner increased in families, and neighbourhoods, and that nations are composed of these smaller societies.

Thus it is evident, that enjoyment is subsequent to doing good. This is the cause; that, the consequence. The way, then, for all men to be happy, is for all men to do good. To do good is, of course, the prime business of man: while enjoyment is a subordinate and secondary consideration.

3dly. *Is not this the necessary nature of things in every other world, where happiness is found, as well as in ours?*

God has made a universe of Intelligent creatures, with capacities to do, and enjoy, good. But, wherever this is in their power, he has always used their faculties for the production of this good. However extensively, or efficaciously, the superintending agency of God is exerted, it is undeniable, that exclusively of his miraculous interpositions, and his general control of the system, the energy and activity of man are the immediate sources of human enjoyment. That this should be the fact is highly honourable to the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. Were men, were any intelligent creatures, unpossessed of any powers to do good; had they only a capacity and inclination to enjoy; were they not to exert their powers voluntarily in the promotion of happiness; they would not, and so far as I can see could not, be in any degree excellent, or amiable in the sight of God; nor in any manner the proper objects either of approbation, or reward.

This, then, appears to be the great law, which regulates the moral universe. With the limitations, which I have mentioned, Angels are the immediate means of their own mutual happiness. Would they, let me ask, or could they, be happy, if they were not virtuous; or virtuous, if they did not do good? Could they be perfectly happy, if they were not perfectly virtuous; or perfectly virtuous, if they did not do good at all times with all their power? Could beings, who were useless to their Creator, and mere drones in the Creation; consuming, but not producing, the delicious sweets of happiness; be capable of any enjoyment, suited to an intelligent, refined, and exalted nature?

4thly. *Can God be supposed to approve of Intelligent beings, who do no good?*

For what reason could his approbation be given? For the possession of faculties, which enabled them to accomplish this glorious object, but which, being perverted, or neglected, and thus voluntarily rendered useless, would be given to them in vain?

Is there, let me ask, any thing lovely in enjoying? Brutes enjoy, and to a considerable extent, through a much greater part of their life, and with a far less mixture of suffering, than can be asserted of man. If to enjoy, therefore, were lovely; brutes would be proportionally lovely in the sight of God; and might, with the strictest propriety, claim a reward. Intelligent beings, who spend life in enjoying only, would be equally destitute of amiableness; and, in the moral sense, would sustain no higher character, than that of superior brutes. The great moral distinction between men and animals is, that men can, and animals cannot, voluntarily do good. Where this is done; men become objects of the divine complacency. Where this is not done; they can be neither approved, nor loved. "Therefore," says *St. James*. "to him, that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

But, if God could not approve of such beings, can he be supposed to communicate to them happiness, of any serious importance? While they were in a state of trial, he might, perhaps, be reasonably expected to sustain them by his goodness. After their trial was ended, can it be supposed, that he would make them happy at all? Communications of happiness, in such a case, are always proofs of his approbation. Where that approbation is not given, therefore, such communications cannot be made.

Are not those, who have done good, the persons, whom mankind respect and honour? Recall to your remembrance the character, as it has been customarily regarded by yourselves, of a man, who does nothing, but sit quietly down to enjoy the bounties of God's providence. Think of a *father*, who, instead of providing for the wants, the interests, the education, of his children, spent his time, and consumed his property, upon his own pleasures: a *Prince*, who employed his extensive power, and the treasures of his country, solely as the means of luxury and splendour; and forgot the rights, safety, and happiness, of his subjects. Think of the *Sage*, who consumed life in amassing knowledge, and

terminated all his designs, and labours, in the enjoyment of intellectual luxury : *the man of taste*, who expended his property, and his time, not in relieving want, assuaging distress, or creating prosperity, for those around him, but in adorning his villa with rich furniture, the choicest products of painting and sculpture, beautiful gardens, and other objects of refinement, merely to enjoy the luscious pleasures of the mental palate, and inhale the delights of admiration and applause. Bring before your eyes an *Angel*, who, if the language may be permitted, basked in the sunshine of heaven, and revelled in the bliss of immortality ; forgetful of the service of his Maker, and regardless of the eternal well-being of his glorious companions. Would not all these, and the last as truly as the others, be pronounced, by the impartial judgment of your own minds, drones in the Creation, and blanks in the kingdom of God? Would the character of either awaken esteem, or merit praise? Instead of being amiable, would they not of course be odious? Instead of claiming respect, would they not be contemptible?

Ascend still higher. Separate in your thoughts, from the other attributes of the GODHEAD, that good-will, which is the energy of the infinite MIND, and that characteristical beneficence, in which it is divinely displayed. Do you not discern, that in this manner *the glory would depart* from the Creator himself; and the face of the uncreated SUN be finally eclipsed? Do you not perceive, that, in this case, the God of the Scriptures would be strongly assimilated to the character, and descend far down towards the level, of the deities of *Epicurus*; who spent their immortal existence in quaffing nectar, and feasting on ambrosia?

The dead, especially those, who have long since died, are usually estimated with impartiality. Whom do mankind remember with sincere respect, and cordial veneration? Not the host of *Asiatic* sovereigns; immured in their palaces; arrayed in splendour; bathed in essences; feasted on dainties; incensed with perfumes; fed, fanned, served, and idolized, by numerous trains of slaves and dependents. Not *Sardanapalus*; not *Vitellius*; not the second *Charles*, of *Great Britain*. It is *Alfred*; it is *Gustavus Vasa*; it is *Gustavus Adolphus*; it is *Washington*; whom mankind remember with delight, and never mention without ve-

neration and praise. But we need not look to heads of armies, nor ascend to the chair of state, to find examples of this nature. The beneficence of *Howard* places him on the same roll of worth with these exalted men. The character of *Paul*, the tent-maker, is not inferior to that of *Moses*, the leader of *Israel*. Not the rulers, but the benefactors, of mankind, and that, whatever has been their station, command the attachment, and the reverence, of the heart. The "Man of Ross" is a title, by the side of which that of Emperor is forgotten. In the whole roll of history, I know not, that what is styled enjoying life has been even mentioned with approbation.

6thly. *Would it be honourable for God to rule an Universe, composed of creatures, who merely enjoyed good?*

We readily conceive the Creator to be invested with the highest glory, in forming and governing an Universe, composed of Intelligent beings, possessed of high and noble faculties, and employing them always for great and illustrious ends: all of which, it is to be remembered, are to be comprised under the general name of beneficence. But, if the Intelligent Universe consisted of beings, who only *ate, and drank, and rose up to play*, in what respect would honour redound to the Creator from its formation, preservation, or government? Consider, for a moment, the character of those, whom in this case he would govern. Instead of saints and angels, they would be animals; superior indeed in capacity, but the same in character and destination. How immensely different would such a kingdom be from the future, celestial kingdom of ever improving virtue, and the ever growing happiness, of which it is the parent.

7thly. *A life of beneficence is happier than a life of enjoyment.*

The Scriptures teach us, that "it is more blessed to give, than to receive." In the address of *St. Paul* to the Elders of *Ephesus* these words are quoted as *the words of the Lord Jesus*; as the sum of all his instructions concerning this interesting subject. They are, therefore, to be received as the great law of the Universe, by which all moral beings are to be governed; and in which the true wisdom, and the real interest, of every such being is unfolded. Still it may be useful to examine the state of facts; that we may learn how far they are conformed to this divine declaration.

Happiness commences in the mind, which is to be happy. *The peace, which passeth all understanding; the joy, which this world cannot give, nor take away, and with which, as being absolutely personal and internal, no stranger can meddle;* are the primary constituents of enduring good. Within the soul; at its undisturbed fireside; must be found that family of harmonious Affections, which are to inhabit and to adorn the mansion, in which enjoyment is to dwell. Here Conscience must reign, be satisfied, and smile. But on what can Conscience smile? Certainly not on a life of sloth, and pleasure. Beneficence is the celestial, the divine, object, at which her eye kindles; and on which, as a fond parent on her beloved child, she looks with serene and eternal complacency. As in the morning of the first Sabbath, which dawned with peace and splendour upon the world, fresh from the forming hand of Omnipotence, the Creator surveyed with smiles the glorious work of his hands; she fixes her eye upon the world within, beautified by this divine energy, and pronounces it *very good*.

Another ingredient of happiness is *the merited Esteem of others; particularly of the wise and good*.

Another, of supreme importance, is *the Approbation of God*.

Another, immensely complicated, and comprehensive, may be comprised under that unlimited appellation, *the Blessing of God*.

All these have already been sufficiently considered; and, if I mistake not, have been decisively shown to flow, as regular consequences, from a life of beneficence. I shall only add to these another consideration; viz. *that, if all diligently exerted themselves to do good, the mass of enjoyment would be speedily accumulated beyond calculation*. Industry, in the proper sense, is the source of the daily enjoyments of life; and Idleness, their destruction, or their prevention. If all were idle, as if they sate down to enjoy, all would be; there would be neither ploughing, sowing, nor reaping; neither corn, nor flax; neither food, nor clothes. Houses would cease to be built; children would be neither instructed, nor governed; and laws would be neither made, nor executed. The protection, the blessings, and even the existence, of Government would terminate. Religion would no longer be taught, nor practised. The present life would stagnate: eternal life would be forgotten.

Like industry in every other case would be industry in this; a perennial source of enjoyment. A spirit of doing good is the peculiar industry of virtuous beings. Its exertions are the culture of the moral world: its harvest is happiness. Wherever it lives, and labours, the crop is exuberant; and all around it *have enough, and to spare*. Heaven is filled with good, because all its inhabitants labour to produce it. Were mankind to imitate them; this desolate globe would again resemble heaven.

3thly. *To do good is to be like God, and like the Redeemer.*

“Thou art good,” says the Psalmist, addressing, and characterizing, his Maker; “Thou art good; and thou doest good; and thy tender mercies are over all thy works.” “Jesus of Nazareth,” says *St. Peter*, giving the character of his Saviour, “a man, who went about doing good.” To do good is the only employment of God. In an unlimited and endless course of beneficence, is he always busied; and in this manner is his glory accomplished, and displayed. But God is infinitely happy. From this employment, and the disposition which prompts it, his happiness supremely arises. All, who would be happy with such happiness as he enjoys, must be *followers of Him, as dear children*, in this divine pursuit. All, who do follow him, will be happy in the same manner, and in some good measure, as he is happy.

REMARKS.

1st. *It is a glorious proof of the excellency of the Scriptures, that they are wholly occupied in fitting mankind to do good.*

The Scriptures themselves declare this to be the end, for which they were revealed. “All Scripture,” say they, “is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect; being thoroughly furnished unto every good work.” In complete accordance with this decisive declaration, the law requires nothing, but that *we love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves*. To this spirit of benevolence are all its rewards promised; and against the contrary disposition are its tremendous penalties denounced. Accordingly, Christ, who *magnified the law, and made it honourable*, filled up his life with

beneficence. This is the import of all his instructions, labours, and example. But it will not be questioned that the life and instructions of Christ are the whole amount of the Gospel. It is the whole design of the Gospel, therefore, as well as the law, to make men good, and to persuade them to do good.

In this mighty and glorious particular no other book is like the Scriptures; none, second to them. All the works of ancient Philosophy, and modern Infidelity, if allowed to have their whole influence on the heart, would terminate in corrupting those, by whom they were read. Some valuable truths, and some useful precepts, they undoubtedly contain; but these are so mingled with a mass of falsehood and licentiousness, that their entire efficacy is only depraving, and dreadful. Accordingly, not one of those, who have conformed their conduct to these writings, has been shown, with any reasonable evidence, to have been a virtuous man; or to have made it his real business to amend the character, and increase the happiness, of mankind.

How illustrious a contrast is presented to us in the life of the Apostles! Look for a moment at the conduct of *St. Paul*. Behold him renouncing wealth, reputation, and pleasure; the high rewards of ambition, and the fascinating charms of influence; his family, his friends, and his country; wandering from place to place, throughout the *Roman* world; over land, and sea; among civilized men, and barbarians; suffering toil and weariness, danger and persecution; imprisoned, scourged, and stoned; yet able to say, and say with truth, "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the Ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." All these labours, losses, and sufferings, this great and good man encountered for the immortal benefit of his fellow-men. For this glorious object he spent his life. For this he expired on the cross.

Contrast with the life, and death, of this Apostle the life, and character, of the ancient Philosophers, and of modern Infidels. Contemplate the affluence, ease, and luxury, in which many of them lived; the bare decency of the best, and the gross vice of almost all; their excessive pride; their insatiable lust of fame; the sanctions, which they have given, both by their example and

their precepts, to the rank indulgence of sensual appetites; their absolute destitution of efforts for the good of mankind; and their universal absorption in base and sordid selfishness; and you will behold one instructive exhibition of the philosophy, which they taught, and of its proper efficacy on the mind of man. You will, also, cease to wonder, that those, who imbibe this philosophy, resemble their teachers; or that those, who cordially embrace the Gospel, should in their life and conversation be followers of *St. Paul*.

2dly. *This doctrine furnishes one of the best means for determining our own characters.*

Is it the commanding object of our wishes, and designs, to do good? We have all, unquestionably, something, at which we aim, as the chief end of our labours. Is this the end? Or do we live, and desire to live, only to enjoy? If the former is our great object, we are children of God; if the latter, we are hitherto strangers to his family, and favour, and to that character, which alone can unite us to both. All good men have possessed this character; and from it have derived their title of good men. If this be not our character; however decent, pleasing, and amiable, in the sight of others, we have no pretensions to goodness; and are still odious in the sight of God.

3dly. *This doctrine will furnish us with an universal Standard, for estimating the characters of our fellow-men.*

Every man is truly estimated, according to the effect of the beneficence, of which he was the voluntary author. All men are furnished with means, and opportunities, of doing good: some with greater; some with less: but all, with those, which are real, and which, if faithfully employed, will enable them to be real benefactors to the world. Every man can glorify his Maker, and promote the happiness of his fellow creatures. Those, who cannot give, may contrive. Those, who cannot contrive, may labour. Those, who cannot labour, may pray. Some, who can cast only two mites into the common treasury, for the service of God, and the happiness and virtue of their fellow-men; will be found to have done more, than a host of the rich, the great, and the splendid. Let no person, therefore, feel as if this divine employment was beyond his power.

Were this equitable standard, for estimating the characters of men, universally adopted; what mighty changes would be made in human reputation? How often would the man of science, who consumes his life in heaping up knowledge, without employing it to any useful purpose, be obliged to give place to the clown, who has never known his alphabet; and who, yet, in his own humble sphere, has laboured for the relief and the comfort of those around him? How often would beauty of form fade away before the superior lustre of a virtuous mind, animating, perhaps, a plain, or even a deformed, person? How frequently would the tongue of eloquence falter and be dumb, before the silent but impressive language of a benevolent life, in a humble man, who had talents for nothing but doing good! How suddenly, as well as frequently, would the wreath of the statesman, and the laurel of the hero, wither before the crown of glory, achieved by a peasant; whom the one ruled with a rod of iron, and the other butchered, perhaps, to swell his power and fame! In a word, how soon would many of the great become little; the renowned be forgotten; the splendid sink into obscurity; and kings, and princes, and nobles, and all those *proud* men, whom *we* foolishly account *happy*, exchange the palace for a cottage, or the throne for a dunghill?

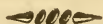
In the day, when "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil;" changes of this nature, endless in their multitude, and immensely important in their alternations of disgrace and glory, will actually take place. Then *those, who are last* in this world, *will* in many instances *be first*; and *those, who are first, will* in many instances *be last*. Then *those only, who have done good, will rise to the resurrection of life*: while *those, who have done evil, will rise to the resurrection of condemnation*. Then pride and fame, wealth and grandeur, will fade and wither beneath the beams of *the Sun of righteousness*. Then, too, the benevolence of the Gospel, which budded only in this unfriendly climate, will open in the eternal sunshine with life, which cannot decay; with beauty, which will never fade; and with fragrance, which will cheer heaven itself through its immortal ages. Then *those, who have voluntarily done good even to the least of Christ's brethren, will be declared to have done it unto him; and will inherit the kingdom, prepared*

for his followers *from the foundation of the world*. At the same time, also, those who have refused, or neglected, this divine employment, will be compelled, with amazement and terror, to *depart from his presence into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. It ought to sink deep into the heart of every one of us, that no reason is alleged, at the final trial, for this immense difference in the future allotments of men, but that some have chosen, and that others have declined, to employ their time, and talents, in accomplishing this glorious object. The former are admitted into heaven, not indeed, as having merited this divine destination, but as being qualified for active and endless beneficence: the latter are shut out, because they are unfitted to pursue this illustrious end of their being.

SERMON XVIII.

ON THE DUTIES CONNECTED WITH A PROFESSIONAL
LIFE.

PREACHED TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE BACCALAUREATE
IN 1796 AND 1805.



PROVERBS iv. 20—27.

*My son attend to my words ; incline thine ear to my sayings :
Let them not depart from thine eyes : keep them in the midst of thine
heart :*

*For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their
flesh.*

*Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.
Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far
from thee.*

*Let thine eyes look right on, and thine eyelids look straight be-
fore thee.*

Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left : remove thy foot from

EVIL.

THESE words are a part of the Instructions, given by David to Solomon ; of a great and wise prince, to a promising son. The character of the Father has been rarely excelled ; his instructions never. The influence, which they had on the son, was of the happiest kind ; and their tendency to profit all men was such, that God, who had originally given them to the Father, thought proper to record them in the sacred Canon, for universal use.

Thus recommended, they cannot fail to have weight, on the present occasion.

In this paragraph the following things are plainly and especially urged on Solomon.

1. That he should *faithfully observe the precepts of his Father*. Vs. 20—22.

2. That he should *keep his heart with all diligence*; that he should watch carefully over his thoughts, and affections; as being the springs of action, and the true source of a good or evil character. V. 23.

3. That he should in like manner, watch over his *lips*; and take effectual care, not to be snared by the words of his *mouth*. V. 24.

4. That he should *examine the course of Life, before him, with seriousness and diligence*; and determine coolly and cautiously, beforehand, concerning all his conduct. Vs. 25 and 26.

5. That, when he had thus considered his course of Life, and determined on what was right, and proper to be pursued; he *should closely adhere to his determination*.

On the present occasion, I stand as a Father to the Youths, whom I am about to address. Through the past year, they have been wholly committed to my parental care; and are now to receive my last parental office. The solemn and interesting nature of the occasion will, I presume, apologize for me, if I confine my observations wholly to them. I wish to say many things to them; but all, that I can ever say to most of them, must probably be said, at the present time.

Without further preface, let me, then, Young Gentlemen, my pupils, my children, endeared to me by many affecting considerations, address to you the following counsels. I trust you will find them, though not the counsels of your real parents, nor of a wise and inspired prince, yet the sentiments of a sincere friend, and sentiments accordant with inspired truth. One interesting circumstance will certainly attend them, they will probably be the *last*, which most of you will ever receive from *me*.

The words, which I have selected for the occasion, as the theme of discourse, are wholly suited to your situation. Nothing can be more important, for you to do; than to treasure up the

good counsels which are given to you ; especially when you are counselled to keep your hearts with diligence ; to watch over your lips ; to ponder and establish the course and conduct of your lives ; and, when you have once determined wisely concerning it, to adhere to your determination, with unshaken firmness. At the same time, when you remember, that these directions were given by David, pursued by Solomon, and sanctioned by God, additional motives will scarcely be necessary to engage your obedience.

You have now finished your academical education, and are about to enter into the busy world. A part, of some kind, or other, you must act in it ; and you doubtless intend, that that part shall be honourable to yourselves, and useful to mankind. To make it such, prudent measures, and vigorous efforts, must be adopted. Allow me in the following observations, to point to you the one, and to prompt you to the other. Some of these observations I shall make because of their inherent importance ; and some because they may never perhaps be made to you by others.

Most of you will, probably, and within a short time, enter in one, or other, of those, which are appropriately called the *learned professions*. With this object before me, let me request you to remember that the

1st. *Duty, incumbent on you, is to qualify yourselves for the profession, which you adopt.*

Although this is, in the highest degree, expedient for you, yet it is by no means to be considered in the light of *mere expediency*. It is an indispensable Duty. In offering yourselves to mankind, in either of these professions, you declare publicly and solemnly, that you have faithfully endeavoured to qualify yourselves for discharging the duties of it ; and with equal publicity and solemnity you announce yourselves to be thus qualified. This profession your countrymen would certainly believe ; had not experience, in various instances, proved to them that their confidence was unfounded. Disappointed as they have sometimes been, they have still an undoubted right to believe the profession, on your part, to be sincere ; and the qualifications, professed, to be real, and adequate to the character assumed.

The great qualification, here intended, is the *Understanding*,

necessary to the skilful discharge of your professional duties. The only possible method of obtaining this qualification is *study*. Without study you will experience deficiencies, which no genius can supply. Genius can invent, and model, but it cannot furnish information. Facts, laws, doctrines, can never be known, unless they are learned; and they can never be learned unless they are studied.

Few subjects are viewed by Youths, with more prejudice, or more self-deception, than *Genius* and *Application*. To Genius have been always attributed qualities, which it did not possess, and effects, which it never accomplished. Its splendour is indeed great and dazzling; but its usefulness has been commonly small, and its value trifling. Pride has perverted it, vanity misguided, vice tainted, and idleness destroyed. Like the car of Phæton, it has alarmed, where it should have blessed, mankind; and, while it should have enlightened and warmed the world, it has only set it on fire.

In the mean time, its efficiency is commonly and egregiously mistaken. No man was ever great *in intellect*; but by means of intense application. The diligence of Demosthenes, of Aristotle, of Plato, and of Cicero, needs no comment. Even Homer, *the heaven born Poet*, studied men, and things, as diligently, as the book-worm his volumes. Bacon, Boyle, Berkeley, Newton, and Locke, were scarcely more distinguished by endowments, than by application. What is to be justly attributed to the Genius, and what to the Study, of each; it is, perhaps, impossible to determine. Suffice it to say, that, without superior diligence, they would probably have all, long before the present time, been forgotten; or remembered merely because they abused their talents, and because when it was in their power, they neglected to become either great or useful.

Reading is not the only mode of studying. *Conversation*, *reflection*, *observation*, and *writing*, have each their peculiar advantages.

Reading wisely directed puts into your possession within a few days or hours the thoughts which others have spent years in collecting; and furnishes you with the *best thoughts*, of the *wisest men*, on the *most important subjects*.

Observation presents to you *facts*, and frequently interesting facts, which you will gain from no other source, and of which you at the same time, possess the most *undoubting certainty*.

Conversation furnishes you with *truths*, which were never written; and awakens in you *valuable ideas* which, otherwise, you would never have entertained. At the same time it teaches you that *readiness of thought*, and of *expression*, so remarkable in men, accustomed to correspond largely with the world.

Reflection, or Meditation makes the knowledge, which you gain from the sources already mentioned, a *part of your own system of thinking*; and arranges your thoughts in that *regular method*, without which they would be a mere heap of rubbish.

Writing, or meditating by the pen, performs the same work, in a *more exact and perfect manner*; and, as it allows abundant opportunity for *reviewing and reforming them*, so it conducts you more *certainly and safely* to truth and rectitude.

Multitudes of Men, who read little, observe, converse, and reflect, much; and are, therefore, in a respectable sense studious. To this fact it is probably owing that Genius has stood in so high reputation. Some men have been great, with but little reading; and have, therefore, been thought great, merely by dint of Genius; whereas they became great by their diligence, as truly, and as much, as the most laborious student. Would you be great men, imitate their diligence. Travel often, and far, in the same paths. Make, at the same time, the utmost advantage of your books. He, who has a library, and will not use it, is a sluggard, possessed of a golden mine, who wears the rags, and starves on the crusts, of beggary, because he is too lazy to dig.

If you need authority to prompt your industry, or to settle your opinions, *that authority* is at hand. Cicero, the greatest genius, scholar, and man, of his own, and of almost all ages, has declared, as the result of all his researches, "*Diligentia vincit omnia.*" Solomon, a much greater, and wiser man, than Cicero, has written or rather God has written by the hand of Solomon, "*The diligent hand maketh rich,*"—and equally in *property, knowledge, eloquence, and virtue*.

Begin your course of professional studies, then, with a fixed de-

termination to study closely, daily, and perseveringly. Read carefully books of the most respectable character, and read them thoroughly. Make diligent reading a business for life. Examine critically what you read. Bow not to the decisions of mere authority, any longer, at least, than until you have opportunity to examine for yourselves. If the *Rulers*, and the *Pharisees* do not believe, let *their* infidelity be no foundation for *yours*.

Arrange in clear order the sentiments which you adopt. Meditate *with*, and *without*, the pen. Without method, your thoughts whether originated, or imbibed, will never be ready for use. The Store may be full, and the goods of great value; but if they be all thrown together from the bale, and the box, it will cost you more time to find that, for which you look, than it will be worth, when found. Put up every thing in its proper place, that it may be ready for the first customer.

Converse, also, freely with others, on the opinions which you embrace. They will view them in a different manner from that, in which you view them. They will often detect your errors, discover the weakness of your arguments, and strengthen you in your just opinions. Should you in this way be sometimes mortified, let it not deter you from persevering. The profit will abundantly compensate for the pain. No man is wise with respect to every subject: all men are wise with respect to some subjects. The Farmer will often improve the Philosopher; nay even the servant can in many things teach his master. Would you know men, or things, converse freely and frequently with persons of every class and station.

Allow yourselves *time* to gain the requisite information. The first impressions concerning the character of a young man are usually of the utmost importance to his success in Life. If they are favourable, moderate industry and prudence will preserve them; if unfavourable, great and long continued efforts will scarcely wear them away. You will not forward your real progress in life by hurrying yourselves into business. Like the tortoise in the fable, the slow and sure runner will usually first reach the goal.

Three years are barely sufficient to furnish you with the necessary qualifications for either of the liberal professions. *Straitened*

circumstances are the only excuse for a shorter period of preparation. Should such circumstances compel you to employ a less time in your preparatory studies, supply the deficiency, as much as may be, by superior application both before and afterwards. Make every day, and every hour, yield its advantages by unremitting diligence. Like Jacob, wrestling with the *angel*, *suffer* not one to *leave you*, till it shall *have blessed you*. Remember, that a little knowledge gained every day, will make a rich year; that drops fill the ocean, and that sands form the shore.

Methodise, for this end, your whole time. Appropriate its due part to recreation, to food, to sleep, and to business. Methodised time, like methodised business, goes on, not only easily, but advantageously. The Pensionary, De Wit, with more business on his hands than fell to any man in Europe, had always leisure for conversation, and for amusement.

For this end, also, *decide, as soon as you can decide satisfactorily*, on the profession, in which you are to spend your lives. Indecision and delay, in this concern will injure your happiness, and your character. Destitute of any object, to engross your attention, and to employ your faculties, your minds will be harassed by suspense, benumbed by listlessness, and depressed by melancholy. At the same time, in a country, where, happily, every man is a man of business, you will be viewed as wavering and indolent, as devouring the sweets of the hive, and adding nothing to the common stock.

2. When you are regularly admitted into the profession, which you adopt, there will usually intervene an *unhappy period* between your first attempts to obtain employment, and your actual attainment of the business, at which you aim. At this period, you will have no present object to fill your attention and your time. At this period, the horizon of life will be overcast, and the clouds of the morning will appear to you to announce a gloomy and distressing day.

In this uncertain, anxious, situation, many worthy and promising young men are driven to the borders of despair, and either droop into inaction, or plunge into vice and infamy. Be warned by their unhappy example; and shun the ruin, in which they have been involved.

While I give you this caution, I ought to assist you, in adopting it, by furnishing you with both means and motives. Remember,

First. *That this is not a case, peculiar to you; that it is not the effect of any fault or inability of yours; but the natural result of the crowded state of the liberal professions.* Divinity is indeed less crowded, than Law or Medicine; but the older, more improved, and more respectable parishes, which most naturally invite the attention of a young gentleman, will present to his eye a moderate number of vacancies.

Secondly. *Bear in mind, that others, who have gone before you, have struggled with the same evils, and surmounted them. They surmounted them by industry and perseverance. The same industry and perseverance will enable you, also, to surmount them. Mankind will always need the services of the wise and the good, and will always possess sufficient ability to discern those, who are furnished with wisdom and goodness. If you labour for these attributes, you will certainly possess them; and if you possess them you will be, for no very long period, unnoticed, or unemployed.*

Thirdly. *In this unhappy interval, seek for any honest employment, to fill up the painful vacuity; any employment, I mean, which will not retard your professional progress. Should it gratify ambition less than you wish, it will supply that deficiency, by its usefulness to your character, and to your peace.*

In this country, all employments, being voluntarily given, are given, of course, to those, in whom confidence is placed. Confidence is always placed in men, who prove themselves to be persons of ability and integrity. This proof is found only in the previous conduct. Our countrymen, with that good sense, for which they are distinguished, uniformly insist on the *high evidence of facts*, as the proper proof of that worth, which is to be rewarded with their confidence. Hence,

Fourthly, results a rule of life of the last importance—*To do whatever business you undertake, as well as you are able.*

As you have acted in the *last* station, which you have holden you will be expected to act in the *next*. From the character which you have sustained, where you *last lived*, will be formed the estimate of those, among whom you *now live*. If you have

discharged the trusts, heretofore reposed in you, and performed the business, which you have heretofore undertaken, with skill and faithfulness, your fellow-citizens will, with confidence, entrust and employ you again. Let not the *smallness*, or *humbleness*, of the employment, induce you to neglect, nor to slight, the duties, which it brings. Whatever it is, you have thought proper to undertake it; and have thus furnished unanswerable reasons why you should discharge it faithfully. In this world, also, as well as in that to come, you are to remember, that *he*, who *has been faithful over a few things*, may expect to be called to *superintend many*. Throughout that period of your lives, which will precede the age of forty, you ought to view yourselves as apprenticed by the public; and to feel the fullest conviction, that whenever your countrymen have become satisfied of your skill and fidelity, in the subordinate gradations of character and business, they will cheerfully employ you as Master-workmen.

3. *When you have begun the business of Life; your chief duty will be fidelity in the business of your profession.*

One of the first requisites to this end, is *diligent study through life*. The immense importance of this requisite is unhappily insufficient, in many cases, to engross the necessary attention. Multitudes of hopeful Youths, and many of them originally studious, for one reason, and another, quit, by degrees, this desirable course; and become so indolent, or so occupied, as, after their entrance into business, to increase, scarcely at all, their understanding, or their reputation. Some professional men are so poor, as to be destitute of books, and obliged to labour daily for subsistence. Others are too much engrossed by their active employments. The Physician has too many patients; the Lawyer too many clients; and the Clergyman too large a parish. Others are already possessed of both business and character, and feel themselves to stand in need of no further application. From these and the like causes, there are comparatively few studious men in any profession.

In neither of these instances is found a sufficient excuse for the neglect of study. The demands of poverty are indeed irresistible; but these demands are rarely so violent, as necessarily to produce the alleged consequence. Men in small circumstances

have much time, which is spent in employments, neither so useful, nor so entertaining, as study. Social libraries are, or may be, established, with a small expense to individuals in every neighbourhood; and books may be frequently and conveniently borrowed. The other classes are totally inexcusable. What unstudious Clergyman might not, with study, preach better sermons? What Lawyer of the same character might not do more justice to his causes? What Physician, to his patients?

In addition to what has been already urged on the subject of study, let me advise you to aim, when you commence business, at *distinguished character*. Be not satisfied with merely escaping blame, or mingling with the mass. Determine to excel; not from the envious wish to look down on others; but from the generous love of excellence; and from the evangelical desire of doing good. Let sloth, ignorance, and insignificance, jog quietly on in the downward track, so congenial to their character. Lift *your eyes* to the hills of science, dignity, and virtue, and consider the rocks and the steeps, as obstacles placed there merely to be gloriously overcome. Halt not, on account of any suspected deficiency in your talents. Toil is the great instrument of excelling; application the chief source of human distinction. Of the great Marlborough, Chesterfield has written, that he was destitute of genius. No man is useful, or honourable, without industry; few industrious men are found to be void of respectable talents.

In the next place, labour to do the best in your power, in every case in which you attempt to do any thing.

Should any of you pursue the *Medical Profession*, do all that for each patient, and do it in the same manner, as you would, if your reputation and your living were suspended on that single case. A great part of medical skill lies in determining the nature of the disease. To make this determination satisfactorily, it will often be necessary, that you should spend no small time in examining. This time you may grudge; it is often grudged. To comfort you under the loss, let me remind you, that you will have done your duty, and that your duty cannot be otherwise done. You must, I am sensible, in this way, deprive yourselves of many amusements; and amusements have many and powerful charms. Probably I may not be able successfully to plead against them. I

have known a physician spend two hours quietly at a social dinner, who has finished his visit to a patient, languishing with a malignant fever, in two minutes. That Physician forgot that God was present.

Consult carefully the best books, in every important case; but more carefully still employ your own eyes to examine facts. In every interesting case, many facts will occur, which no book will describe. These will also be varied in new manners, and blended in new complications. The least, and seemingly the most insignificant, are often of high importance.

Whatever you observe, of a peculiar nature, note in a commonplace book; and ultimately arrange, in a volume of superior character. Whatever other importance this may sustain, it will be *certainly known* by you, will, of course, be highly useful to you, and may be so to mankind.

Aim, also, at a friendly and honourable intercourse with your medical brethren. Such an intercourse has not always existed among gentlemen of that profession. In cases of high distress, the wretchedness of many families has been aggravated, by finding, that they could not have the benefit of one Physician's advice, merely because they had employed another. A contrary conduct will confer on you honour and distinction. Let me advise you, for this end, to speak respectfully, at least not censoriously, of your brethren; and if you should be called upon to visit their patients, not to preface *your* prescriptions with censuring *theirs*.

Some of you will probably be found at the *Bar*. In this station, I shall not think it necessary to urge upon you honesty in transacting the *pecuniary* concerns of your clients. To this coarsespun honesty a very moderate regard for your own prosperity will sufficiently prompt you. A more refined integrity ought to engage your attention. Your own feelings in the ardour of contest, and the wishes of your clients, will naturally present to you strong temptations to enhance arguments, to discolour facts, and to pervert Law. Suffer not these temptations to prevail. Make it at first, a rule, from which you are never to swerve, to understand the true import of Law as well as you can, and to represent it in exact accordance with your views: to watch

facts, as they are exhibited by witnesses, and to state them *nakedly*, as they appear to you; to weigh arguments with candour, and to give them in your exhibitions just that weight, which you believe them to possess, and no more. You may not, by this conduct, advance, in *every* instance, your property, or your character; but you will do what is right: you may not gratify your clients; but you will be approved by good men, by your consciences, and by your God.

In *the Desk*, fidelity will require you to declare honestly and boldly, as Paul did, *all the counsel of God*. You will neither be willing to flatter, nor afraid to alarm, your hearers, so far as truth and duty require. In no wise *affect* to say alarming things; but in no wise fear to say them. The Condition of all impenitent sinners is an alarming condition; and cannot, if represented with truth, be otherwise represented.

The same fidelity will require you both to believe, and to preach, whatever you find in the Scriptures. If any thing, which the Scriptures appear to you to declare, contravene doctrines, which you know to be generally believed, especially by wise and good men, examine with modesty, and with care; but if you find yourselves compelled to differ from them, differ boldly and honestly. Your Reason, and all your advantages, were given you, that you might judge for yourselves.

At the same time, despise the love of innovation. The present is, emphatically, and to a degree of frenzy, the age of innovation. Beardless boys, treading on the threshold of science, pert coxcombs, the mere retailers of a few scientific terms, obtained, and understood, as parrots obtain and understand the language which they utter, will inform you, and have the impudence to inform mankind, that the present is the only enlightened age of man; that the world has slumbered in chains of ignorance and prejudice, for six thousand years; that light has just begun to dawn upon the earth; and that true philosophy never condescended to bless mankind until the present age. Were all this trumpery true, how could these silly children know it to be true? Of philosophy, of the present, of past ages, they know nothing.

Beware of philosophical divinity, even when recommended

by the brightest names. Man cannot devise a theological system, which will bear the scrutiny of an hour. The subject is too vast, too complicated, for our limited minds.

I said, says Solomon, (Hodgson,) I shall attain it ;

But it is far off from me.

How distant is it, and deep !

Deep ! who can reach it ?

Though a wise man think to find it out,

Yet shall he not be able.

What man cannot invent, he is here equally unable to improve.

Beware of attempting to mend the work of God. It is not consistent with probability, nor as I apprehend with the divine promise, that the Church of God should in all preceding ages have been universally ignorant of the substance of the Gospel. That part of it, which by itself, and by its enemies, has been termed orthodox, has in every age holden the doctrines of grace, or what are called the doctrines of the Reformation. It cannot be, that this vast body of divines and Christians should have been substantially wrong. But if they have been, Philosophy cannot set them right. *To the Law and to the testimony, if you intend to rectify either yourselves or others. If any men speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.* Before you teach others, learn, yourself, of the perfect teacher. The Bible only has brought men back from error to the truth of God. All the leading heretics have been Philosophers, and their philosophy has been the *ignis fatuus* which has misled both them and their followers.

If you would be faithful, you will endeavour to *preach alway, in the best manner* you are able.

To this end follow the *great example* set before you in the *Scriptures*.

First. Examine carefully how the subjects of preaching are there handled. Mark the unceasing *variety of matter and manner*, and the *comparative attention* bestowed on *each subject*. *Vary* continually in your own discourses ; and let it not be said of you, that you preach in *one narrow* round of subjects, or that you handle all subjects in *one unvaried manner*. Allot to no subject a greater proportion of time and attention, than you see warranted

by the attention given to it by the Scriptures; and remember that *all Scripture was equally given by the inspiration of God*, and that *all is pronounced by him to be profitable, for furnishing the man of God to every good work.*

Secondly. Set every subject and sentiment, as much as may be, in *that light*, which is most agreeable to the *views of Common sense.* Draw your arguments, illustrations, and enforcements, *de medio*—from familiar sources, and objects. You may, indeed, in this way sacrifice a little literary pride; but, to compensate this loss, you will gain the attention, the esteem, and not improbably the Souls, of your hearers.

Ignorant and uneducated preachers are necessitated to tread in the same beaten track, and continually to reiterate the same things. In them it is a fault, that they preach at all; in you it will be a fault, to preach like them. If you preach learnedly, you will perhaps astonish your congregations; but you will most probably lose both them, and your labours.

Thirdly. Avoid both a florid, and a slovenly style. A chaste, manly, energetic style is the style of the desk, and, let me say, of all good writing. The attention ought to appear to have been bestowed on things, and not on words; and the beauty of the language ought to flow apparently from this, that such language was the most natural and obvious language to him, who had such good things to utter.

Fourthly. Avoid affectation. Ridiculous every where, in the desk it is detestable. If your own manner should *not* be the best it will be the best which *you* can use. A borrowed coat never sate well on any man.

Fifthly. Be *seriously in earnest.* Every preacher, if he would effect any thing, must both believe, and feel, what he declares. From earnestness, eloquent sentiments, and persuasive language naturally spring. In truth, earnestness is itself the soul of eloquence. All men, when engaged and earnest, are eloquent; unless they have unhappily contracted, beforehand, habits of awkwardness, and violations of nature.

Sixthly. Use your *own method* of handling every subject. A general sameness has been introduced into the preaching of this country, from an apprehension, that the established manner is the

only good one, or decidedly the best. Every Man thinks, as well as speaks, and acts, in a manner different from every other; and every man's manner is a good one, and for himself the best. A pleasing novelty may thus be thrown over your manner, which will scarcely be found in your matter. At the same time, seek not for such novelty. If you seek for it you will only be *odd*; if you merely follow nature, you will be *new*.

4. You will be all *citizens*. In this character, *love* and *support* the *institutions of your country*. In this age of innovation, visionary philosophers have retailed abundantly their reveries, on political subjects, as well as others. They have discovered, that men are naturally wise and good, prone to submit to good government, and pleased to have their passions and appetites restrained; and that all the errors and iniquities of our species are derived merely from the oppression of the privileged, and the great. From these principles, adopted in defiance of every fact, they have drawn consequences repugnant to every reason, and fraught with every folly, danger, and mischief. You will find all men substantially alike, and all naturally ignorant, and wicked. You will find every man pleased, not merely to be free, but to tyrannize; and to indulge without restraint, and without degree, both appetite and passion; and to be impatient of every law, which in any degree restrains either. The most arrant tyranny, of which you will ever hear, is the tyranny of a mob; and the most dangerous domination, that of a Jacobin Society. All men, when assembled in multitudes, are more unreasonable, more unjust, more tyrannical, and every way more wicked, than when they are separate; because they *dare* to be so.

Whatever you find in man, better than I have asserted, is the result of human discipline, or of divine grace. In the Institutions of our own country, this discipline is more perfect, than it has been in any other. Proportionally great, and good, have been its effects; in proportion to these effects, is its inestimable value; and such, if you are wise and honest men, will be its value in your minds. Educated in knowledge, in morals, in religion, from the cradle to the grave, our Countrymen *can* enjoy their unexampled freedom, with safety, order, and peace. No nation, not thus educated, can long be free at all. More free than we are, Man, with

his present character, cannot be. If we can preserve such freedom, we shall do, what has never been done. The only possible means of its preservation, miracles apart, is the preservation of those institutions, from which it has been derived.

All these are courses of conduct, without which you cannot, I conceive, be wise, honest, or useful, in your several characters. They are solemn Duties, which you owe to mankind, and to God. As such I have thought them proper subjects of this valedictory sermon. But,

5. You will, also, be men. You are creatures of the infinite God; the subjects of moral agency; accountable for the use of your time and talents; and advancing daily to the period, when you will be judged and rewarded.

In this character, I scarcely need remind you, that a steady adherence to rectitude in all your conduct, is of an importance which cannot be measured. Every aid, which will contribute to this end, you cannot but prize; every motive you cannot but feel. The following suggestions will, of course, not be without their influence. In the

First place. *Bring the condition*, in which you thus stand, *home to your hearts*. It is not a small, or inefficacious attainment, for Man to realize his condition; to make his state, and his destination, a serious part of his system of thinking; to calculate the business of his life for such a being as himself; and to suit the part, he is to act, to the character, which, at his creation, he was necessitated to assume. Were this effectually done, the conduct of most if not of all, men would probably assume, in some measure a different complexion from that, which it actually wears. Let not the mistakes of others influence *you*. With a manly independence of mind, think, understand, realize, what you are, and for what you are designed. Daily, and willingly remember, that you are not the beings of a day, but the heirs of eternity; that you were not designed, to shine, to flutter, and to expire; but through an endless progress to honour your Maker and to bless your fellow-creatures. Should these ideas be suitably impressed on your minds, should they be inwoven in the habits of your thought, you cannot fail to be affected by them, and in some measure to assume the propriety, and the dignity, of such a station.

Secondly. *Dare to act, and fixedly determine to act, according to the dictates of your own judgment.*

This may seem to you a singular direction. You have been told by all your instructors, and what is infinitely more, you are told by the Word of God, that to listen to advice is the highest wisdom of youth, and *that in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.* As I have often repeated, and enforced, these doctrines to you, you will not imagine, that I now intend to impeach their truth, or to lessen their importance. The direction which I am now considering, is, if I mistake not, perfectly accordant with these maxims of wisdom. Seek, and receive advice, on every occasion; but of that advice, and of every thing else, judge for yourselves. For what other end were you endowed with the capacity of judging?

In the mean time, allow me to say, this direction is not merely true, it is also of high importance. A large part of the follies, the vices, and the miseries of mankind may be traced solely to an unhappy adoption of fashionable opinions, and a thoughtless imitation of fashionable practices: opinions which few of those, who adopt them, believe; and practices, of which few of those who follow them, approve. A desire to be like others, is one of the most prominent features of the human character. To resemble others in wisdom and virtue is glorious; to resemble them in things indifferent is certainly not censurable; but to assume folly, and to make vice your pattern, because others are foolish and vicious; to tread in the steps of blockheads, coxcombs, infidels, or villains, merely from a propensity to imitation, is a sacrifice of reason, a voluntary idiocy, a wanton suicide. When others around you utter wisdom, and act with rectitude, avail yourselves of the social spirit, and catch the wisdom and the rectitude. When others swerve, nobly assert your own independence, and refuse to follow them. Determine to have only your own faults to answer for. If mankind would universally thus act, folly would scarcely grow in this unhappy world, and vice would soon be esteemed an exotic.

Thirdly. Diligently read, and faithfully obey, the sacred Scriptures.

Assuming, what is a mere and totally irrational assumption,

that the Scriptures are not of divine origin, they will still teach you more wisdom, and lead you to better conduct, than all the volumes produced by man. This they will also accomplish with a certainty and an efficacy, wholly singular; in ways most ingenious and happy; and with motives of every kind, addressed to every feeling, and fraught with infinite force. The single aim of the Scriptures is to make men virtuous. The end is supremely excellent; it is glorious; it is divine. The means used in them for its accomplishment are scarcely less deserving of these epithets; for to say the least, which can be truly said, almost all the virtuous men, who have existed, have been made such by them. We know of no other book which has made men virtuous at all.

But the Scriptures *are* of divine origin. Numerous, ingenious, and most industrious men, have, through more than sixteen hundred years, laboured to disprove their character, as a Revelation. The work is, however, no nearer to its accomplishment, than when it was begun. Had the design been practicable, it could scarcely have failed of coming before this time, to an issue. If you will faithfully examine, and will at the same time dare to judge for yourselves, you will find that the controversy between Christians and Infidels has been merely; whether man should yield to passion and appetite, or to argument, to duty, and to God; whether he should live for time, or eternity; as an animal or as an intelligent being; for earth or for heaven; for himself or for his Maker; whether God is the Moral Governor of all rational beings, or the Sluggard of Epicurus, housed in his own Elysium, quaffing sensual enjoyment, and wholly indifferant to the Universe of creatures.

Fourthly. In all your conduct, think before you act, and especially inquire, how such action would appear to you, on a dying bed.

On that bed you will drop most of your prejudices, and will no longer be under the influence of passion or appetite, of reverence for the world, or devotion to fashionable opinions and practices. This world, and its objects, will recede; and Eternity, with its infinite concerns, will draw nigh. Should you then possess, unimpaired, your rational faculties, you will see the true nature of things more clearly, and estimate their value more justly. You

will see, that *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, and the means by which they are gratified ; form a wretched character, constitute a wretched possession, and furnish a wretched hope. You will see, that the scramble for wealth, honour and pleasure, ardently as it may have engaged you, and wholly as it may have engrossed others, was, on the one hand, a silly puppet show of children, and, on the other, a frenzied tumult of bedlam.

Although you cannot perfectly form the same estimate of things, until you come to this solemn, this life-explaining situation ; yet you may, in no unhappy degree, reap its advantages through every period of your lives. It is in the power of man, with suitable efforts to place himself in any situation, to realize the scenes, which it would present, and to imbibe the sentiments, to which it would give birth. Accustom yourselves to the situation, in which you will actually be on a dying bed ; and you will realize such sentiments as will be there entertained. Your estimate of the world, of yourselves, of duty, and of happiness, will, by degrees, resemble the final estimate ; your passions, appetites and prejudices, will lose their dominion over you ; the world will cease to be your God ; present enjoyments and sufferings will appear to be the dreams of a moment ; and future things no longer distant or dim, will rise, expand and approach, with amazing solemnity and grandeur. Thus circumstanced, it will be impossible for you not to live, as candidates for eternity, and for heaven.

Fifthly. Remember, that God is always where you are, and perfectly sees, hears, and knows whatever you think, speak, or do.

Sixthly. Remember, that you are sinners ; and that it is therefore impossible, that you should be virtuous in this Life, or happy in that to come, but by an interest in the Redeemer.

I will not attempt to prove to you that you are sinners. If you have ever looked into your own hearts, or examined at all your own lives, you cannot but know this to be your real character. Nor can you, instructed as you have been, in divine things from the cradle, nor even in the exercise of sober reason unassisted by Revelation, seriously believe for a moment, that impenitent sinners can be accepted, justified, and blessed of God. God, the infinite-

ly holy, cannot but hate sin, and determine that without holiness no man shall see his face. His unchangeable law admits of no repentance as the ground of restoration; and his voice has declared Christ to be to mankind the only hope of glory. On his Expiation, then, Man, if ever to be saved, must rely; for there is no salvation in any other. To become interested in this Expiation, you must confide in it. Distrust or Unbelief will be a wall of partition between you and him. so long as it remains; and confidence can alone unite you to him. Why should you not believe in him? Is he not worthy of being trusted? Is he not able; is he not willing; is he not faithful? Has he not satisfactorily proved all these things by what he has done? Does he demand of you any sacrifice, but of your sins? Does he impose on you any burden, but your duty? Is not this sacrifice gainful? Is not this burden light? Is not he the best of all friends; present at all times, and in all places, on earth, in heaven, in time, and in eternity? Will you not need his favour and an interest in his atonement on a dying bed? Seek him then, while he is to be found; fly to him, while he is near. Seek him early; and you will find him, and be loved by him forever.

In what manner let me ask you would you act, if you were standing before the Shechinah of the Jewish temple; and beheld the cloud rolling and the lightnings darting over your heads? How would you act if you were with the Israelites at the foot of Sinai; while the earth trembled beneath, the trumpet of God sounded above, the smoke of the mountain ascended up to Heaven, and the glory of the Lord embosomed its summit in the flame of devouring fire? You would undoubtedly, with Moses, exceedingly fear and quake; if you did not, with the *congregation*, fall down to the earth, deprived of motion and sense. The same God will always accompany you, equally awful in himself, though not manifested in a manner equally terrible. Ask yourselves, then, always, when about to act, how will this conduct appear to the eye of God? If it cannot stand this test, it will never abide in the day, when he shall judge the secret things of men.

Thus have I attempted to form a compendious directory for the future conduct of your lives. Much, that I wished to say, I have been obliged to omit; but if what I have said be faithfully regard-

ed, many other useful things will follow of course. I have now, and always earnestly wished your good and laboured to promote it. To hear of your prosperity, your wisdom, and your virtue, will sweeten the cup, which God appoints to me ; and furnish an additional beam, to cheer the evening of my life. The connection formed between you and me, is of such a nature, that it cannot be destroyed, but by folly and vice, on your part, or on mine. While we both live, you will have my best wishes, and most fervent prayers : and whenever God should be pleased to call me away from this world, should he in infinite mercy call me, at the same time, into his kingdom, to share with his children the blessings of his everlasting love, it will give me transports, which no tongue can utter, to see you all around me ; and to be able to say, " Behold, here am I, and the children, whom thou hast given me."

SERMON XIX.

THE NATURE AND DANGER OF INFIDEL PHILOSOPHY.

SERMON I.

PREACHED TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE BACCALAUREATE
IN 1797.



COLOSSIANS ii. 8.

Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after CHRIST.

WHEN the Gospel was published by the Apostles, it was, according to the prophetic declaration of its Author, vigorously opposed by the world. This opposition originated from various sources; but, whencesoever derived, wore one uniform character of industry, art, and bitterness. The bigotry of the Jews, and the sword of the Gentiles, the learning of the wise, the persuasion of the eloquent, and the force of the powerful, were alike exerted to crush the rising enemy.

Among the kinds of opposition, which they were called to encounter, not the least laborious, malignant, or dangerous, was the Philosophy of the age. A large number of their first converts lived in countries, where the language of the Greeks was spoken, and their Philosophy received. The things, which this Philosophy professed to teach, were substantially the same with those which were taught by the Apostles; viz. the Character and Will of God, and the Duty and Supreme Interest of Men. Hence it naturally became an object of veneration, assumed the station of

a rival to the Gospel, and exhibited an imposing aspect, especially to young and unsettled converts.

The doctrines, and the spirit, of the Philosophers were, however, generally direct counterparts to those of the Apostles. Some truths, and truths of high importance, they undoubtedly taught; but they blended them with gross and numberless errors. Some moral and commendable practices they, at times, inculcated; but so interwoven with immoralities, that the parts of the web could never be separated by the common hand. Covetous, self-sufficient, and sensual, they looked down with supreme contempt on the poor, self-denying, and humble followers of Christ, and on their artless, direct, undisguised, and practical preaching. Notwithstanding this contempt, it, however, prevailed against all their specious logic, pompous eloquence, and arrogant pretensions. Their Philosophy, enveloped in fable and figures, perplexed with sophistry, and wandering with perpetual excursion round about moral subjects, satisfied, in no permanent degree, the understanding, and affected in no useful degree the heart: while the Gospel simple, plain, and powerful, gained the full assent of common sense, and reduced all the affections under its control. Of course, the contempt of Philosophers was changed into hatred, rivalry, and persecution; and their ridicule of Christianity was succeeded by the serious efforts of violence and malignity.

St. Paul, who appears thoroughly to have comprehended the nature, and often to have experienced the effects, of the existing Philosophy, has with great force exposed its dangerous tendency. In the beginning of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, he has given an ample account of its inefficiency and emptiness, and a full refutation of its insolent pretensions to be a rule of life and salvation. The arguments of its weakness and mischievous tendency, furnished, in various passages of Scripture by him and his companions, remain still unrefuted; and, as they were at first, so they are at this day, effectual means of preserving no small part of mankind from the destruction, of which it is the natural and certain parent.

In the text, this Philosophy is characterized in a most proper and forcible manner. It is termed Philosophy and vain deceit; a Hebraism, of the same import with vain and deceitful Philoso-

phy; deceitful in its nature, doctrines, and arguments, and vain in its efficacy to accomplish the ends, which it proposes. It is asserted to be *after the tradition of men, and after the rudiments of the world*; but *not after Christ*; in whom, the Apostle subjoins, *dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*: i. e. it is such a scheme of morals and religion, as is suited to the character of the Inventors; Men, weak and wicked, deceived and deceitful; unable to devise, to comprehend, or to teach, the character of God, or the duty of mankind. It is such a scheme of morals and religion, as accords with the principles and practices of the disciples, to whom it is taught; formed not with a design to amend the heart, and reform the life; but with a view to gain acceptance by flattering lust, and by justifying, soothing, and quieting guilt. The tradition of men, and the rudiments of the world, are phrases, which may be variously interpreted, but they admit. I apprehend of no interpretation, which, will not support the paraphrase here given.

To this Philosophy, and the teachers of it, the Apostle directs his followers to *beware lest they should become a prey*. The Greek word here used, denotes *gathering and carrying finally off the spoils of a vanquished enemy*; and therefore strongly expresses the complete ruin, to which St Paul considered his converts as exposed.

The Philosophy, which has opposed Christianity in every succeeding age, has uniformly worn the same character with that, described in the text. It has rested on the same foundations, proceeded from the same disposition, aimed at the same ends, and pursued them by the same means. Equally remote has it been from truth, equally unsupported by evidence, and equally fraught with danger and ruin.

Satisfied of the justice of these assertions. I feel it, Young Gentlemen, to be my duty, on this occasion, to exhort you

To beware, lest you become a prey to the Philosophy, which opposes the Gospel.

To impress on your minds the propriety, and the importance, of this exhortation, I shall endeavour, in the

First place, To prove to you, that this Philosophy is vain and deceitful;

Secondly, To show you, that you are in danger of becoming a prey to it; and

Thirdly, To dissuade you by several arguments from thus yielding yourselves a prey.

First. I shall endeavour to prove to you, that this Philosophy is vain and deceitful.

You will observe, that it is a particular kind of Philosophy, against which all my arguments are directed. Philosophy at large, or the Use and the attainments of our Reason, in the candid and careful examination of every question, within the limits of our understanding, so far as it springs from a real desire of investigating truth, and proceeds on satisfactory evidence, is not only undeserving of censure, but deserving of the highest praise. It is the interest, and the duty, of all men, so far as their condition will allow; and, as you well know, has by me, in the office of an Instructor, been earnestly and unconditionally urged on you, as peculiarly your interest and duty. That Philosophy only, which is opposed to Christianity, is the subject of the following observations. There is indeed much other Philosophy, which busies itself with government, medicine, and various other subjects, which is equally vain and deceitful; but with this I have, at present, no concern.

The great object, professedly aimed at by the Philosophy in question, and on the attainment of which all its value depends, is to determine what is the Duty, and the supreme Interest, of man. This it is plain, must depend entirely on the Will of God. To do whatever God chooses must be man's supreme interest, and duty alike. It is his duty, both because God wills it, and because it is right. As his whole well-being depends on God only, his supreme interest must consist entirely in pleasing God. He can receive no good, when God will not give it, and God will not give, unless he be pleased. In order, therefore, to the discovery of man's supreme interest and duty, it is absolutely necessary to discover, first, what is the preceptive will of God, or what God requires man to do.

This, Philosophy can never accomplish; and hence I assert it to be vain and deceitful in its Nature; vain with respect to the end, at which it aims, and deceitful with respect to the means,

which it employs, and the conclusions, which it labours to establish.

There are three methods, in which, it has been supposed, mankind may obtain the knowledge of the Preceptive Will of God, and, of course, of their own interest and duty.

I. By Immediate Revelation ;

II. By Arguing analogically from his Providential dispensations ;

III. By arguing from a supposed Character of God, either derived from his works, or determined *a priori*.

The first of these methods lies out of the present question. The two remaining ones I propose now to examine ; and assert,

I. That Analogical Argumentation from the Providence of God can never teach us his Preceptive Will, except in a manner greatly imperfect and unsatisfactory.

In Philosophy, thus directed, we always argue from what God has done to what he will do : i. e. from the past and present state of his Providence we undertake to determine what his designs are, and how they will terminate ; and hence derive our conclusions concerning the Will of God. or that Law, by which our conduct ought to be regulated. This method of Philosophizing is attended with insuperable difficulties.

In the first place, we know but a very small number of the beings and events, which have existed ; but, to form just views of the real scope of Providence, we ought to know every being and every event. To understand the true character of a complicated machine, we must understand the nature, and the operations, of every part. He who knows but one in a thousand of such parts, and has seen the operations of that one part only, would be thought wholly destitute of common sense, were he to boast of a thorough knowledge of the whole. The great machine of Providence is infinitely more complex, the proportion of the parts unknown to those which are known is infinitely greater, and the approximation to the knowledge of the whole infinitely less, than in the machine supposed. What then must be the character of him, who boasts of a thorough knowledge of Providence ?

2. We know not thoroughly the nature of those beings and events, with which we are best acquainted. The nature of every being, and of every event, so far as the present question is concerned,

depends chiefly, or perhaps with more propriety wholly, on its connections with others? What are the uses of this being, or this event? What are the purposes, which it is designed to accomplish? are the questions, which are ever intended to be solved, in our inquiries of this nature. But these questions Philosophy can never satisfactorily solve. The immediate uses and purposes are, indeed, frequently obvious; but those, which lie at a very little distance, are, for the most part, unknown. Bread, we know, will nourish man; and safely determine, that bread was formed for this end; but why man exists at all, why he thus exists, and why he is thus to be nourished, we know not. That, which we know, avails not, therefore, to the purpose in view.

All intermediate and subordinate ends in Creation and Providence are capable of being understood only by the knowledge of the ultimate end: i. e. the purpose, in which all earthly things terminate. To this end all things directly tend; with it all are indissolubly connected; and for it all are designed, and brought into being. But this end is wholly unknown. If it exist on this side of the grave, it has never been conjectured. If it exists beyond the grave it can only be conjectured; for we can only conjecture whether man will exist beyond the grave. The ultimate end of all earthly things being, therefore, wholly unknown, the true nature of all preceding subordinate ends is also unknown, and of course the real scope of Providence.

In such a state of things Analogies must plainly be of little use. The arguments, which they actually furnish, are all direct corroboratives of the Scriptural system of Theology, and Morality. Without the Scriptures, they are a labyrinth without a clue. No higher proof need be given of this, than the discordant and contradictory explanations of them, adopted by Philosophers; no two of whom, either ancient or modern, agree in their constructions of Providence.

How ridiculous an employment would it be thought in a Clown, should he undertake to interpret the designs of a Statesman, in the management of a great empire; to determine from what he had done what he would hereafter do; and to decide on his own duty, and that of his fellow subjects, from a construction of the

analogies, which he supposed himself to observe in the conduct of the Ruler? Yet the Clown is infinitely nearer to the Statesman, in understanding, than the Philosopher to the Supreme Ruler; and infinitely more able to comprehend the analogies, visible in the government of an empire, than the Philosopher those, which appear in the government of the Universe.

3. The Character of God cannot be perfectly known from Creation and Providence.

Of the truth of this assertion I am entirely convinced; yet I shall decline attempting a discussion of it, at this time; because the occasion will not allow me to enter into so wide a field; and because you have, not long since, heard my opinions and arguments at large, in discourses professedly formed on this subject. Such a discussion, it ought further to be observed, is wholly unnecessary for the present purpose; as Philosophers have totally disagreed concerning that Character of God, which is supposed to be visible in his works; and as the prevailing Philosophy wholly denies the existence of such a Being.

The only possible means of discovering the Will, or Law, of God which can be furnished by his works, are either his Designs, or his Character. I flatter myself, that it has been proved, that his designs can never be learned from his works. If his character be also undiscoverable from this source, the conclusion is certain, that his Law must also be undiscoverable. If his Character can be learned imperfectly only, his Law must, at the utmost, be known in a degree equally imperfect. If his character be uncertain, his law must be at least equally uncertain: and that his character is uncertain, so far as his works disclose it, and Philosophy has discovered it, cannot be denied by any one, acquainted at all with the discordant opinions of Philosophers. Of course, the conclusion must be admitted, that to Philosophy the Law of God, and the Duty, and supreme Interest, of man, must, so far as this method of investigation is relied on, be undiscoverable. Thus Man, as a subject of the divine government, cannot, by Philosophy, ever thoroughly know, from this source of proof, what is that conduct, which he is bound to observe, in order to please God, and obtain his favour.

The view of this subject, here given, does, however, by no

means exhibit the greatest difficulty, under which Philosophy labours. Man is not only a subject of the divine government, and, therefore, in the highest degree concerned to know the divine Law, that he may obey it; but he is also a rebel subject, and, therefore, in the highest degree concerned to discover the means of restoration to the favour of God. Man has violated such precepts of the divine Law, as, either by Revelation, or Common sense, are discovered and acknowledged: such precepts, for instance, as require him to be thankful to his Maker, and sincere, just, and kind, to his fellow-men. These things may be considered, here, as certainly known to be parts of the Law of God; because those Philosophers, who acknowledge a God, generally agree, that these are plainly duties of man. But all men have violated the precepts, which require these things. The first interest of all men is, therefore, to obtain a knowledge of the means, if there be any, of reconciliation to God, and reinstatement in the character and privileges of faithful subjects. To be thus reconciled, and reinstated, men must be pardoned; and pardon is an act of mere Mercy. But of the Mercy of God there are no proofs in his providence. Could we then discover the Law of God, by examining his works, the knowledge of it would avail nothing to our future well-being. That we are sinners cannot be disputed; and, so far as Philosophy can discover, sinners must be condemned, and punished.

II. Arguments, drawn from a supposed character of God whether derived from his works, or determined *a priori*, labour under difficulties equally great.

1. It is impossible to determine the character of God by arguments *a priori*.

The celebrated Doctor Clarke has indeed attempted thus to prove the divine character; and his attempt is a specimen of very respectable talents, and of the most laudable designs. Yet I cannot but think it has failed. The very words, *necessary* and *necessity*, which are so important to his scheme, are not, I apprehend, used by him with any clear, precise meaning. Perhaps I ought rather to say, that I cannot perceive any such meaning, in his manner of using them. From his illustrations I should believe, that he means nothing more by necessary existence, than

existence merely. He does not appear to me to have proved even the Unity of God; and unless this can be evinced, I am doubtful whether it will be possible to prove the perfect character of the Godhead. As his is the only respectable effort of this kind, which I have seen, it is unnecessary for me to take notice of any other.

2. Should the character of God be supposed completely ascertained from what he has done, or fully determined a priori; still insurmountable difficulties would attend every attempt to gain, from this source, the object aimed at by Philosophy.

The only character of God which can be here admitted is that of Infinite Perfection. The designs of a Being infinitely perfect, must be formed to extend through eternity and immensity; and must embrace all beings and all events, together with all their relations and operations. That therefore, which, by itself, would be a wholly improper part of Creation, or Providence, might, from its relation to the whole great work, be entirely proper. In the sight of him, who perfectly knows all things, that may be beautiful, excellent, and necessary, as a part of the system, which to every one, who knows a part, and a very small part only, of the whole number of things, would appear deformed and useless. How many measures in Government, how many even in the private affairs of an individual, appear to us to be necessary and useful when we are thoroughly informed of their necessity and use, which, when we are uninformed, appear to be unnecessary and injurious? How much more must this fact exist in the system of the universe? He, who sees all things perfectly, must decide concerning all, according to their whole influence and tendency; we, according to their insulated character, or their immediate consequences.

These observations are abundantly supported by the real state of Creation and Providence. The existence of Moral and Natural evil; the death of half mankind under the age of five years; the uselessness, to the human eye, of most animals and vegetables; the redundance of water on the globe; and the frozen, burnt, or otherwise barren, state of the land; are all things wholly proper in the Creation and Providence of God, because they exist; and his Agency in their existence, in whatever degree exerted, is

wholly worthy of his character. Yet, so far as we are able to judge, few things could be more improper parts of a work, formed by Infinite Perfection.

Thus in its Nature must this Philosophy be vain and deceitful. I shall now attempt to show, that, in fact, it has, from the beginning, been of this unhappy character. This will appear in the

I. Place, in the discordance and contradictoriness of its doctrines.

According to Themistius, there were more than three hundred sects of the western Philosophers, differing greatly, on subjects of high importance. According to Varro, there were two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions, entertained by them, concerning the summum bonum, or chief good; and three hundred opinions concerning God; or, as Varro himself declares, three hundred Jupiters, or supreme deities. Critias, Theodotus, Diagoras, the Pyrrhonists, New Academics, and Epicureans, were generally either Sceptics, or Atheists.

Aristotle denied the Creation of the Universe, and the Providence of God, so far as this world is concerned.

The Stoics, and various others, taught, that God was fire.

Parmenides held, that God was partly fire, and partly water.

Xenophanes, that Matter, generally considered, was God.

Others held, that God was the *Anima mundi*, the Soul of the world.

Socrates and Plato taught the existence of one God, and taught, and practised, the worship of the numerous gods of their country.

Cicero and Plutarch held, that there were two supreme Gods, one good, the other evil.

These instances are sufficient to show how the greatest and most accurate Philosophers of Antiquity thought concerning this most important subject; and to prove, that not the least reliance can be safely placed in our religious concerns, on the conclusions of Philosophy.

This variety and discordance of doctrines, among Philosophers exceedingly perplexed and distressed, in many instances, the Philosophers themselves; while it wholly destroyed their authority, as instructors, among the people at large.

Plato, in his *Epinomis*, says, under a strong conviction, as it would seem, of the imperfection of his own Philosophy, “ Let no man presume to teach, if God do not lead the way.”

Cicero, *de nat. deor.* makes Cotta find fault with those, who labour to prove the existence of the gods, by arguments ; declaring, that they thus make the doctrine doubtful ; whereas the traditions of their ancestors had rendered it certain.

Plutarch declares, that no argument, respecting religious belief, is more to be depended on, than the tradition of ancestors.

Plato declares, that there are, by nature, no such things, as just things ; since men always differ about them, and contrive, continually, new standards of right and wrong ; and that, therefore, there can be no law, unless God should give it to us.

Porphyry confesses his conviction, that some universal method of delivering men’s souls was needed, which no sect of Philosophers had yet found out.

Modern Philosophers, notwithstanding they have enjoyed the light of Revelation, and have derived from the Scriptures all their defensible moral tenets, are yet, when they leave the doctrines of Revelation, very little better united.

Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the first considerable English, Deistical Philosopher, and clearly one of the greatest and best, declares the following things : viz.

That Christianity is the best religion :

That his own Universal Religion of Nature agrees wholly with Christianity. and contributes to its establishment :

That all Revealed Religion (viz. Christianity,) is absolutely uncertain, and of little or no use :

That Men are not hastily, or on small grounds, to be condemned, who are led to sin by bodily constitution :

That the indulgence of lust, and of anger, is no more to be blamed, than the thirst, occasioned by the Dropsy ; or the sleepiness, produced by the Lethargy.

That it is our duty to worship God by prayer and praise. by repentance and holiness, by reformation of heart and of life ; and that this is indispensably necessary to our acceptance with God :

That the soul is immortal ; that there will be a future retribution. which will be according to the works, and thoughts, of man-

kind ; and that he, who denies these truths, is scarcely to be accounted a reasonable creature :

That his own Universal Religion is, and ever has been, clearly known to all men :

That to the Gentiles (i. e. to almost all men) it was principally unknown :

And, notwithstanding the declarations, already mentioned, in favour of Christianity, he accuses all pretences to Revelation of folly and unreasonableness, and rejects with contempt its capital doctrines.

Mr. Hobbes declares,

That the Scriptures are the Voice of God ; and yet

That they are of no authority, except as enjoined by the Civil Magistrate :

That inspiration is a supernatural gift, and the immediate hand of God ; and yet

That it is madness :

That the Scriptures are the foundation of all obligation ; and yet

That they are of no obligatory force, except as enjoined by the Civil Magistrate :

That a subject may believe Christ in his heart ; and yet

May lawfully deny him before the Magistrate :

That God exists ; and yet

That that, which is not Matter, is nothing :

That worship, prayers, and praise, are due to God ; and yet

That all religion is ridiculous :

That the civil or municipal Law is the only foundation of right and wrong :

That, where there is no civil law, every man's judgment is the only standard of right and wrong :

That the Ruler is not bound by any obligation of truth, or justice ; and can do no wrong to his subjects :

That every man has a right to all things, and may lawfully get them, if he can :

That Man is a mere machine : and

That the Soul is material and mortal.

Mr. Blount declares,

That there is one infinite and eternal God; and yet insinuates,

That there are two eternal, independent Beings:

That the one God is the Creator of all things; and yet insinuates,

That the world was not created, but eternal:

That God ought to be worshipped, with prayer and praise; yet,

He objects to prayer as a duty:

That Christianity is safer than Deism; and yet

That Revelation is not sufficiently supported, because men differ about it: (Of course, no moral doctrine is sufficiently supported; for men differ about every such doctrine.)

That the Soul is immortal, and will be rewarded hereafter, according to its works done here; and yet,

That the Soul is probably material, and of course mortal:

Still he says, that we ought to obey God in the practice of virtue;

And that we ought to repent, and trust in the mercy of God for pardon.

Lord Shaftesbury declares,

That the belief of future rewards and punishments is noxious to virtue, and takes away all motives to it;

That the hope of rewards, and the fear of punishments, makes virtue mercenary;

That to be influenced by rewards is disingenuous and servile; and

That the hope of reward cannot consist with virtue; and yet,

That the hope of rewards is not derogatory to virtue, but a proof, that we love virtue;

That the hope of rewards, and the fear of punishments, however mercenary it may be accounted, is, in many instances, a great advantage, security, and support, of virtue; and

That all obligation to be virtuous arises from the advantages (i. e. the rewards) of virtue, and from the disadvantages (i. e. the punishments) of vice:

That those are censurable, who represent the Gospel as a fraud (or imposition):

That he hopes the discourses of Doctor Whichcot will reconcile the enemies of Christianity to it, and make Christians prize it more highly than before ; and

That he hopes Christians will be secured against the temper of the irreconcilable enemies of the faith of the Gospel ; and yet

He represents salvation as a ridiculous thing ; and insinuates, That Christ was influenced, and directed, by deep designs of ambition, and cherished a savage zeal and persecuting spirit ; and

That the Scriptures were a mere artful invention to secure a profitable monopoly (i. e. of sinister advantages to the inventors :)

That Man is born to religion, piety, and adoration, as well as to honour and friendship ;

That virtue is not complete without piety ; yet

He labours to make virtue wholly independent of piety :

That all the warrant for the authority of Religious symbols (i. e. the Institutions of Christianity) is the authority of the Magistrate :

That the Magistrate is the sole judge of Religious Truth, and of Revelation :

That miracles are ridiculous ; and

That, if true, they would be no proof of the truth of Revelation :

That Ridicule is the test of truth ; and yet

That Ridicule itself must be brought to the test of Reason :

That the Christian Religion ought to be received when established by the Magistrate ; yet

He grossly ridicules it, where it was thus established :

That Religion and Virtue appear to be so nearly connected, that they are presumed to be inseparable companions ; and yet

That Atheists often conduct so well, as to seem to force us to confess them virtuous :

That he, who denies a God, sets up an opinion against the very well-being of society ; and yet

That Atheism has no direct natural tendency to take away a just sense of right and wrong :

That Atheism is greatly deficient in promoting virtue ; and

That the natural tendency of it is to take away a just sense of right and wrong.

Mr. Collins, though chiefly a mere objector to Revelation, declares,

That Man is a mere machine :

That the Soul is material and mortal :

That Christ and his Apostles built on the predictions of fortune-tellers and divines ;

That the Prophets were mere fortune-tellers and discoverers of lost goods ;

That Christianity stands wholly on a false foundation ; yet

He speaks respectfully of Christianity ; and also of the Epicureans, whom he at the same time considers as Atheists.

Mr. Woolston, also a mere objector, declares,

That he is the farthest of any man from being engaged in the cause of Infidelity ;

That Infidelity has no place in his heart ;

That he writes for the honour of Jesus, and in defence of Christianity ; and

That his design in writing is to advance the Messiahship, and Truth, of the holy Jesus ; “ To whom,” he says, “ be glory for ever, amen,” and yet

That the Gospels are full of incredibilities, impossibilities, and absurdities ;

That they resemble Gulliverian tales of persons and things, which out of romance never had a being ;

That the miracles, recorded in the Gospels, taken literally, will not abide the Test of Reason and Common sense ; but must be rejected, and the authority of Jesus along with them ;

At the same time, he casts the most scurrilous reflections on Christ.

Dr. Tindal declares,

That Christianity, stripped of the additions, which mistake, policy, and circumstances, have made to it, is a most holy religion ; and yet,

That the Scriptures are obscure, and fit only to perplex men, and that the two great parts of them are contradictory :

That all the Doctrines of Christianity plainly speak themselves to be the will of an infinitely wise and holy God ; and yet,

That the Precepts of Christianity are loose, undetermined, in-

capable of being understood by mankind at large, give wrong and unworthy apprehensions of God, and are generally false and pernicious :

That Natural Religion is so plain to all, even the most ignorant, men, that God could not make it plainer ; even if he were to convey, miraculously, the very same ideas to all men ; and yet,

That almost all mankind have had very unworthy notions of God, and very wrong apprehensions of Natural Religion :

That the principles of Natural Religion are so clear, that men cannot possibly mistake them ; and yet,

That almost all men have grossly mistaken them, and imbibed a superstition worse than Atheism.

That Natural Religion is unalterable ; that nothing can be either added, or diminished ; and that it is necessarily known to all men ; and yet,

That the goodness, or wickedness, of all actions is wholly measured by their tendency ; that this tendency is wholly to be judged of by every man, according to his circumstances ; and that these circumstances are continually changing :

That one rule is formed by God for every man ; and yet,

That every Man must form a rule for himself.

Mr. Chubb declares,

That he hopes to share with his friends in the favour of God, in that peaceful and happy state, which God hath prepared for the virtuous and faithful, in some other, future world ; and yet,

That God does not interpose in the affairs of this world, at all, and has nothing to do with the good, or evil, done by men here :

That Prayer may be useful, as a positive Institution, by introducing proper thoughts, affections, and actions ; and yet he intimates,

That it must be displeasing to God, and directly improper :

That a state of rewards and punishments, hereafter, is one of the truths, which are of the highest concern to men ; and yet,

That the arguments for the immortality of the Soul are wholly unsatisfactory ; and that the Soul is probably matter :

That men are accountable to God for all their conduct, and will certainly be judged and dealt with, according to the truth and reality of their respective cases ; and yet,

That men will not be judged for their impiety or ingratitude to God, nor for their injustice and unkindness to each other; but only for voluntary injuries to the public; and that even this is unnecessary and useless:

That God may kindly reveal to the world, when greatly vitiated by error and ignorance, truths necessary to be known, and precepts necessary to be obeyed; and yet,

That such a Revelation would be, of course, uncertain and useless;

That Christ's Mission is, at least in his view, probably divine; and yet,

That Christ, in his opinion, was of no higher character, than the Founder of the Christian sect (i. e. another Sadoc, Cerinthus, or Herbert:)

That Christ was sent into the world, to acquaint mankind with the Revelation of the will of God; and yet,

That his birth and resurrection were ridiculous, and incredible; and that his institutions and precepts were less excellent, than those of other teachers and lawgivers:

That the New Testament. Particularly the Writings of the Apostles, contain excellent cautions and instructions for our right conduct; and

That the New Testament yields much clearer light than any other traditionary Revelation; and yet,

That the New Testament has contributed to the perplexity and confusion of mankind, and exhibits doctrines heretical, dishonourary to God, and injurious to men; and

That the Apostles were impostors; and that the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles resemble Jewish fables, and Popish legends, rather than accounts of facts:

That, as, on the Christian scheme, Christ will be the Judge of the quick and the dead, he has not on this account (i. e. admitting this to be true) any disagreeable apprehensions on account of what he has written; and yet,

He ridicules the birth and resurrection of Christ, postpones his instructions to those of the Heathen Philosophers and Lawgivers, asserts his doctrines to be dishonourary to God and injurious to mankind, and allows him not to be sinless: but merely not a gross sinner.

He further declares,

That the Resurrection of Christ, if true, proves not the immortality of the Soul :

That the belief of a future state is of no advantage to society :

That all Religions are alike :

That it is of no consequence what Religion a man embraces :

And he allows not any room for dependence on God's Providence, trust in him, and resignation to his will, as parts of duty, or religion.

Mr. Hume declares,

That there is no perceptible connection between cause and effect ;

That the belief of such connection is merely a matter of custom ;

That experience can show us no such connection ;

That we cannot with any reason conclude, that, because an effect has taken place once, it will take place again ;

That it is uncertain and useless to argue from the course of nature, and infer an Intelligent Cause ;

That we cannot, from any analogy of nature, argue the existence of an Intelligent Cause of all things ;

That there is no reason to believe that the Universe proceeded from a Cause ;

That there are no solid arguments to prove the existence of a God ;

That experience can furnish no argument concerning matters of fact, is in this case useless, and can give rise to no inference ; and

That there is no relation between cause and effect ; and yet,

That Experience is our only guide in matters of fact and the existence of objects ;

That it is universally allowed, that nothing exists without a cause ;

That every effect is so precisely determined, that no other effect could, in such circumstances, have possibly resulted from the operation of its cause ;

That the relation of cause is absolutely necessary to the propagation of our species, and the regulation of our conduct ;

That voluntary actions are necessary, and determined by a fixed connection between cause and effect ;

That motives are causes, operating necessarily on the will ;

That man is a mere machine (i. e. an object operated on necessarily by external causes ;)

That there is no contingency (i. e. nothing happening without a settled cause) in the universe ; and

That Matter and Motion may be regarded as the cause of thought (i. e. The Soul is a Material Cause, and thought its effect :)

That God discovers to us only faint traces of his character, and that it would be flattery, or presumption to ascribe to him any perfection, which is not discovered to the full in his works (and of course, that it would be flattery or presumption to ascribe any perfection to God :)

That it is unreasonable to believe God to be wise and good ;

That what we believe to be a perfection in God may be a defect ; (i. e. Holiness, Justice, Wisdom, Goodness, Mercy, and Truth, may be defects in God ;) of consequence, Injustice, Folly, Malice, and Falsehood, may be excellences in his character ;

That no reward, or punishment, can be rationally expected, beyond what is already known by experience and observation :

That self-denial, self-mortification, and humility, are not virtues, but are useless and mischievous ; that they stupify the understanding, sour the temper, and harden the heart (and of course are gross crimes :)

That pride and self-valuation, ingenuity, eloquence, quickness of thought, easiness of expression, delicacy of taste, strength of body, health, cleanliness, taper legs, and broad shoulders, are virtues :

That Suicide, or self-murder, is lawful and commendable (and of course virtuous :)

That Adultery must be practised, if we would obtain all the advantages of life :

That Female Infidelity (or Adultery) when known, is a small thing ; when unknown, nothing : and

That Scepticism is the true and only wisdom of man.*

* The following summary of Mr. Hume's doctrines, published some years before his death, Bishop Horne says, was never, so far as he could find, questioned, as to its fidelity or accuracy, either by Mr. Hume, or his friends.

A Summary of Mr. Hume's Doctrines, Metaphysical and Moral.

Of the Soul.

That the soul of man is not the same this moment, that it was the last: that we know not what it is; that it is not one, but many things, and that it is nothing at all.

That in this soul is the agency of all the causes that operate throughout the sensible creation; and yet that in this soul there is neither power nor agency, nor any idea of either.

That matter and motion may often be regarded as the cause of thought.

Of the Universe.

That the external world does not exist, or at least, that its existence may reasonably be doubted.

That the universe exists in the mind, and that the mind does not exist.

That the universe is nothing but a heap of perceptions, without a substance.

That though a man could bring himself to believe, yea, and have reason to believe, that every thing in the universe proceeds from some cause; yet it would be unreasonable for him to believe, that the universe itself proceeds from a cause.

Of Human Knowledge.

That the perfection of human knowledge is to doubt.

That we ought to doubt of every thing, yea, of our doubts themselves, and therefore, the utmost that Philosophy can do, is to give us a doubtful solution of doubtful doubts.

That the human understanding, acting alone, does entirely subvert itself, and prove by argument that by argument, nothing can be proved.

That man, in all his perceptions, actions and volitions, is a mere passive machine, and has no separate existence of his own, being entirely made up of other things, of the existence of which he is by no means certain; and yet, that the nature of all things depends so much upon man, that two and two could not be equal to four, nor fire produce heat, nor the sun light, without an act of the human understanding.

Of God.

That it is unreasonable to believe God to be infinitely wise and good, while there is any evil or disorder in the universe.

That we have no good reason to think the universe proceeds from a cause.

That as the existence of the external world is questionable, we are at a loss to

Lord Bolingbroke declares,

That Power and Wisdom are the only attributes of God, which can be discovered by mankind; and yet,

That he is as far from denying the Justice, as the Power, of God; that his Goodness is manifest: at the same time, he ascribes every other Perfection to God, as well as Wisdom and Power, and says, this is rational;

That the Wisdom of God is merely a natural attribute, and in no sense moral; and yet,

That the Wisdom of God operates in choosing what is fittest to be done; (of course, it is a moral attribute; involving perfect moral rectitude, as well as perfect knowledge;)

That God is gracious and beneficent;

That whatever God has done is just and good;

That such moral perfections are in God, as Christians ascribe to him; yet

He censures divines for ascribing these perfections to God:

That we learn from our own Power and Wisdom, the Power and Wisdom of God; and yet,

find arguments by which we may prove the existence of the Supreme Being, or any of his attributes.

That when we speak of Power, as an attribute of any being, God himself not excepted, we use words without meaning.

That we can form no idea of power, nor of any being endued with power, *much less* of one endued with infinite power; and that we can never have reason to believe, that any object or quality of any object exists, of which we cannot form an idea.

Of the Morality of Human Actions.

That every human action is necessary, and could not have been different from what it is.

That moral, intellectual, and corporeal virtues are nearly of the same kind—In other words, that to want honesty, and to want understanding, and to want leg, are equally the objects of moral disapprobation.

That adultery must be practised, if men would obtain all the advantages of life—that, if generally practised, it would in time cease to be scandalous; and, that, if practised secretly and frequently, it would by degrees come to be thought no crime at all.

Lastly, as the soul of man, according to Mr. Hume, becomes every moment a different being, the consequence must be, that the crimes committed by him at one time cannot be imputable to him at another.

That it is profane, to ascribe the excellencies of our nature to God, although without limit or imperfection :

He undertakes to defend the Righteousness of God against divines ; and yet asserts,

That Holiness and Righteousness in God are like nothing in men ; that they cannot be conceived of by men, nor argued about with any certainty ; and that to talk of imitating God in his moral attributes is blasphemy :

That God made all things ; and yet,

That he did not determine the existence of particular men : (of course, he did not determine the existence of any man ; all men being particular men.)

That he will not presume to deny, that there have been Particular Providences ; and yet,

That there is no foundation for the belief of any such providences ; and that it is absurd and profane to assert, or believe, them :

That God is just ; and that justice requires, that rewards and punishments, be measured to particular cases, according to their circumstances, in proportion to the merit, or demerit, of every individual ; and yet,

That God doth not so measure out rewards, or punishments ; and that, if he did, he would subvert human affairs ; that he concerns not himself with the affairs of men at all ; or, if he does, that he regards only collective bodies of men, not individuals ; that he punishes none except through the Magistrate ; and that there will be no state of future rewards, or punishments :

That divines are deserving of censure for saying, that God made Man to be happy ; and yet he asserts,

That God made Man to be happy here ; and that the end of the human state is happiness :

That the Religion of Nature is clear and obvious to all mankind ; and yet,

That it has been unknown to the greatest part of mankind :

That we know Material substance, and are assured of it : and yet,

That we know nothing of either Matter. or Spirit :

That there is, undeniably, something in our constitution, beyond the known properties of matter; and yet,

That the Soul is material and mortal; and that to say, the Soul is immaterial is the same thing as to say, that two and two are five:

That Self-love is the great Law of our nature; and yet,

That Universal Benevolence is the great Law of our nature:

That Christianity is a republication of the Religion of Nature, and a benevolent system; that its morals are pure; and that he is determined to seek for genuine Christianity with the simplicity of spirit, with which Christ himself taught it in the Gospel; and yet,

A great part of his Works, particularly of his Philosophical Works, was written for no other end, but to destroy Christianity.

He also declares,

That there is no conscience in Man; except artificially:

That it is more natural to believe many Gods than to believe One:

He teaches, that Ambition, the Lust of Power, Avarice, and Sensuality, may be lawfully gratified, if they can be safely gratified:

That the sole foundation of Modesty is vanity, or a wish to show ourselves superior to mere animals.

That Man lives only in the present world;

That Man is only a superior animal:

That Man's chief End is to gratify the appetites and inclinations of the flesh:

That Modesty is inspired by mere prejudice:

That Polygamy is a part of the Law, or Religion, of Nature. He intimates also,

That Adultery is no violation of the Law, or Religion of Nature:

That there is no wrong in Lewdness, except in the highest Incest:

That the Law or Religion of Nature forbids no Incest, except between the nearest Relations: and plainly supposes,

That all Men and Women are unchaste, and that there is no such thing, as Conjugal Fidelity:

These doctrines will serve as a specimen of the Philosophy, which actually exists. Volumes would be necessary for even a summary account of all its diversities. I need only observe further, that, with respect to the Existence, Character, and Providence, of God, Philosophers differ wholly. Most of the Infidels, of the present age, entirely deny his existence, and treat the belief of it as a contemptible absurdity. Voltaire, at first, believed in a finite God; but, in his old age, doubted of the existence of any God. Toland believed the world to be God. Many of them suppose him to resemble the gods of Epicureans, to be totally absorbed in pleasure and quietude, and to be utterly unconcerned with the creatures, which, nevertheless, he has thought proper to make. Amid such a diversity, and discordance, whom are you to follow; and what are you to believe?

2dly. In the gross and monstrous Nature of its Doctrines.

Of this character were very many doctrines of the Ancient Philosophers.

Zeno taught, that all crimes were equal; that we ought never to forgive injuries; and that the most abominable lewdness is lawful.

Both Zeno and Cleanthes taught, that Children may as lawfully roast and eat their parents, as any other food.

Diogenes, and the Cynics generally, taught, that Parents may lawfully sacrifice and eat their Children; and that there is neither sin, nor shame, in the grossest and most public acts of lewdness.

Plato taught, that lewdness is justifiable; and

Cicero, that it is a crime of small magnitude.

Lycurgus encouraged stealing by an express Law.

Aristippus taught, that both theft and adultery are lawful.

Cicero, that it is lawful to make war, for the sake of fame, provided it be conducted without unnecessary cruelty.

Cicero also taught, that Virtue consists in the desire of fame. Of course Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar, Charles the twelfth of Sweden, and Nadir Kouli Khan, were among the most virtuous of mankind.*

* For several of these doctrines see Deism Revealed.

The occasion will not allow me to swell the number of these specimens of the ancient Philosophy. I proceed therefore to observe, that the moderns have uttered numerous doctrines, of a similar character. Such is the Atheism, which they now consider as the only rational and enlightened Philosophy. Such is the Scepticism of Hume; the mortality and materiality of the Soul; the doctrine, that Man is a mere animal; that animal gratification is the chief end of our being; that right and wrong depend solely on the decisions of the magistrate; that ridicule is the test of truth; that we may lawfully get all things, if we can get them safely; that modesty is inspired only by prejudice, and has its foundation in the mere desire of appearing to be superior to animals; that Adultery is lawful according to the Religion of Nature; that there is no wrong in lewdness, except in the highest Incest; that God exercises no Providence over mankind; and that holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, may be defects in the Divine character. All these, and many others already recited, are doctrines as repugnant to Common sense, and Common good, and fraught with as much impiety and irreverence to God, and as much evil to mankind, as any doctrines, which can be proposed. When we view the pernicious tendency of these Doctrines (and these are the substance of the modern Philosophy) we may safely say, that, thoroughly practised, they would overwhelm this world with that misery, which the Scriptures exhibit as experienced only in hell. When we contemplate the folly of these doctrines, we may with the utmost propriety apply to the modern Philosophers what Cicero says of their predecessors; viz. that he knows not how it comes to pass, that, when any man utters an absurdity ever so gross, he presently finds the same absurdity to have been delivered by some one of the Philosophers.

3. In its total inefficacy to reform either themselves, or their Disciples.

Cicero declares, that the ancient Philosophers never reformed either themselves or their disciples; and that he knew not a single instance, in which either the teacher, or the Disciple, was made virtuous by their principles.* Lucian declares them, as a

* See Deism Revealed.

body, to have been tyrants, adulterers, and corrupters of youth. Plutarch declares Socrates and Plato to have been as incontinent, and intemperate, as any slave; and Aristotle to have been a fop, a debaucher, and a traitor. Dion Cassius gives no better character of Seneca. Diogenes and Crates committed lewdness, without a blush, in the streets; doubtless believing, with Lord Bolingbroke, that modesty was inspired by mere prejudice. Speusippus, who appears to have believed, with Mr. Hume, that adultery must be practised, if we would obtain all the advantages of life, was caught, and slain, in the act of adultery. Aristippus kept a seraglio of strumpets and catamites, and perjured himself, to cheat a friend of a sum of money, which that friend had left in his hands; and refused also to educate his own children; styling them mere vermin. Menippus, because he had lost a sum of money, murdered himself; as did also Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus, Cleombrotus, Cato the younger, and Brutus. Cato the elder parted with his wife to Hortensius, and was accused of drunkenness. Xenophon was a notorious sodomite, and said in the absence of a boy, whom he kept, "I would be blind to all things else, so that I might see Clinias:" and again, "thanks to the sun, which discloses to me the face of Clinias." The ancient Philosophers, indeed, were generally noted for sodomy. Plutarch, acknowledging the fact, makes for them this apology, that, though they corrupted their bodies, they made amends for it by improving their souls. In truth, nothing better was to be expected from them, than what is here recounted; for their doctrines warranted these, and most other crimes.

These are among the most respectable of those men, whose theological and moral systems modern Philosophers prefer to that of Christ and his Apostles. The morals of the Moderns have, in some instances, been more decent; in others, very little different.

The true character of all men may be certainly known by their opinions. No man is better than the moral opinions, which he holds, will make him, if drawn out into life and practice. Few are in any measure so good. I do not deny, that men may be more decent, before their fellow-men, than the tendency of their doctrines would lead us to believe; but in this there is no principle, no virtue. All is the result of wishing to live agreeably,

and to possess reputation. The worst of all men have this desire as really, and often as strongly, as any others, even the most virtuous.

The doctrines of these Philosophers, it will easily be seen, by even a slight recourse to the account already given of them. forbids the belief, and the existence, of virtue in those who embrace them.

Lord Herbert declares, that the indulgence of *lust* and anger is no more to be blamed, than the thirst of a fever, or the drowsiness of the Lethargy. In this single sentence, by a sweeping stroke, the guilt of gluttony, sloth, drunkenness, lewdness, wrath, contention, and revenge, is entirely blotted out.

Mr. Hobbes declares, that every man has a right to all things, and may lawfully get them, if he can ;

Again, " A subject may lawfully deny Christ before the Magistrate, although he believes Christ in his heart ;"

Again, " A Ruler is not bound by any obligation of truth, or justice, and can do no wrong to his subjects ;" and

Again, the Civil Law is the sole foundation of good and evil, of right and wrong.

In the first of these declarations, mankind are let loose upon each other. in all the hideous ways of fraud. theft, plunder, robbery, peculation, oppressive taxation, and piracy ; in the second, lying and perjury are completely authorized, as all such denials were customarily made under oath ; the third is an universal sanction of all the horrid evils of despotism ; and the fourth an entire annihilation of right and wrong, and of course of all morality.

Tindal has, also, set morality wholly afloat, in declaring, that every man must form a rule for himself, a rule to be changed as circumstances, always varying, shall change. Nor has Chubb left the subject at all more settled, or safe. He declares, that all religions are alike ; that it is of no consequence, what religion a man embraces ; that the belief of a future state is of no use to society ; and that God does not interpose in the affairs of this world at all, and has nothing to do with the good, or evil, done by men, here. The well-being of society cannot be overthrown, nor morality destroyed, more effectually, than by these opinions, should

they be made rules of human conduct. If all Religions, i. e. all systems of Moral and Theological doctrines, are alike, it is clearly either because all are wholly true or wholly false, or because all are proportionably true and false, or because moral and theological truth is of no importance. The two first are plainly false suppositions, Mr. Chubb being the judge; for he has declared one system to be true, viz. his own; and another to be false, viz. that of the Gospel. Of course, the last is the true supposition as it stood in his mind. Of consequence no doctrines are of any importance: in other words, Truth is of no use to man. Moral and theological truth is plainly more important to man, than any other; if this be of no significance, none else can be: an opinion fitter for the mouth of a fiend, than for that of a man.

Nor are the two last declarations of his less fatal. No bond has ever holden mankind, none ever will hold them, together, beside the belief of the presence, and providence of God, and of an approaching state of rewards and punishments.

Shaftesbury, Hume, and Bolingbroke. have laboured, at least equally, to destroy the belief of these doctrines, and have thus aimed the axe at the root of human happiness.

Shaftesbury, also, when he asserts salvation to be ridiculous, the magistrate to be the sole judge of religious truth, Atheism not to take away a just sense of right and wrong, and to be no way deficient in promoting virtue, unhinges all serious thinking, and all moral impressions, silences rational inquiry, and obliterates every distinction, which can usefully regulate the conduct of intelligent beings.

The same confusion is introduced by Hume, when he ranks bodily and intellectual endowments, and casual attainments, with virtues. denies the virtuous nature of humility and self-denial, and asserts that of pride, self-valuation, and suicide.

But what shall be said of this celebrated writer, when he gravely informs us, that Adultery must be practised, if we would obtain all the advantages of life? Must not plunder, falsehood, assassination, piracy, war, and tyranny, be also practised on the same principle? Were these or any other crimes ever practised, but for the sake of advantages either obtained, or expected? What

shall we say of him, when, from Rochefoucault, he repeats, and to show his fondness for it, often, the maxim, that Female Infidelity, when known, is a small thing, when unknown, nothing.

Bolingbroke has more openly and violently attacked every important truth and serious duty. Particularly he has licensed lewdness, and cut up chastity and decency by the roots.

What idea must be entertained of the morals of men, who assert these things, not in careless conversation, not in grave conversation, not in sportive writings; but in solemn, didactic, Philosophical treatises, sitting in the chair of moral and religious instruction, speaking to a world, uttering oracular opinions, deciding the duty and happiness both temporal and eternal of the whole human race, and unfolding professedly the will of the infinite God? They either believed, or disbelieved, these doctrines. If they disbelieved them, what apology can be made for so gross and so mischievous falsehood? If they believed them, the conclusion is irresistibly forced upon us, that they practised as they believed. They have also laboured to the utmost to persuade mankind both to believe and practise them. If their labours prove successful, if their wishes should be accomplished, the world will be converted into one theatre of falsehood, perjury, fraud, theft, piracy, robbery, oppression, revenge, fornication, and adultery. What else is the hell of the Scriptures? Lewdness alone, extended as their doctrines extend it, would exterminate every moral feeling from the human breast, and every moral and virtuous action from the human conduct; Sodom would cease to be a proverbial name; and Gomorrhah would be remembered, only to wonder at her unhappy lot, and to drop the tear of sympathy upon her ashes.

I know it is often said; it will probably be said in the present case; and perhaps by no small number of persons; that, provided a man is honest in his belief, he is to be considered as a virtuous man, unless his life disprove the opinion of his virtue. If by this declaration it be intended, that the man in question has faithfully sought for truth, and as faithfully collected, duly weighed, and candidly admitted, all the evidence within his reach, I readily acknowledge, that he has done his duty, and is therefore in this instance undoubtedly virtuous. But that men who believe false

hood, and such gross and palpable falsehood, have really thus done, is yet to be proved.

If it be intended, that, when a man really believes error, he is, by the reality of his belief, constituted virtuous, I deny the doctrine wholly; and all those, who assert it, deny it also. The Arabians, who, under the standard of Mohammed, butchered half mankind, believed that they were doing what was right. Multitudes of Catholics, in the last century, unquestionably believed it to be the will of God, that they should perjure themselves, in their correspondence with Huguenots; and that they should roast, dislocate, and assassinate, that unhappy class of men by thousands. Christians have, beyond controversy, really believed, in many instances, that the persecution of Infidels was agreeable to the will of God. Cicero believed it to be right to have a civil war kindled in Rome, that he might return from exile. Numbers of people in Copenhagen, at a certain time, believed it to be right to murder their neighbours, that, under the horror of an approaching death, themselves might be induced certainly to repent of sin, and to gain eternal life. Alexander, with full conviction of the rectitude of his designs, wasted the Persian empire, and demanded divine homage to himself.

None of those with whom I am disputing, will pretend, that all these persons were justified in their designs and conduct by the reality of their belief of its rectitude.

It will be further said, as it often has been by others beside Mr. Chubb, that what a man believes is of no importance. Infidel writers ought never to advance this doctrine: for their conduct in labouring so earnestly to destroy the faith of Christians, and to establish that of Infidels, gives the lie to the declaration. If the assertion be true, a man may, according to the opinion of the assertors themselves, as well be a Christian in his belief, as an Infidel. But the assertion is not true; and they prove, by every page of their writings, and by every sentence of their conversation, that they feel it to be false; for they labour with the greatest industry, and ardour, to change the tenets of their fellow-men.

All the volitions of the mind are of course accordant with the prevailing dictates of the understanding; and all the actions of

men spring from their volitions. Such, then, as is the moral nature of the opinions of a man, will be the nature of his moral conduct. Obedience to error is vice; obedience to truth is virtue. All men hold errors; and all men hold probably some moral truths. Good men obey, mainly, the truths which they receive, and not the errors. Wicked men wholly obey, in their moral conduct, the errors which they adopt, and reject truth as a rule of conduct.

Complete virtue is formed by the reception and obedience of truth only. Such is the virtue of the heavenly inhabitants. In the present world such virtue does not exist; for truth is not received by any man unmixed with error; nor is the truth, which is received, alone and perfectly obeyed. The most perfect earthly orthodoxy is, therefore, mingled with error, and the most perfect earthly virtue with vice. Hence extensive room is furnished for the exercise of charitable regards to such, as differ from us in many moral doctrines.

But this charity has its limits. The truths holden must, in this case, be fundamental truths; or those on which virtue can rest; and the errors must not be fundamental errors; or opinions subversive of all virtue. The man, who seriously believes in the rectitude of lying, cruelty, fraud, lewdness, and impiety, cannot be virtuous.

The man, who is pleased with error, is, in the exercise of that emotion, guilty. To love the means of vice, or sin, is the same thing in a moral view as to love sin. Error is the certain means of sin in every sense. As a rule of conduct, it leads to nothing but sin; as a temptation to sin, it is of incalculable power; as a justification of sin, it is of all opiates to the conscience, and of all supports to the heart, beyond measure the greatest. The man, who loves it, is therefore a guilty enemy to himself, a dishonour of the God of truth, and a destroyer of his own well-being. The man who devises, publishes, and with ingenuity defends it, is the common enemy of God and mankind. To the evil, which he does to the universe, no bounds can be fixed; and with all this evil he is chargeable. The ravages of Alexander were probably less injurious to the human race, and less guilty before God, than the ravages of the moral world by Hume, or Voltaire.

Herbert, Hobbes, Shaftesbury, Woolston, Tindal, Chubb, and

Bolingbroke, are all guilty of the vile hypocrisy of professing to love and reverence Christianity, while they are employed in no other design than to destroy it. Such faithless professions, such gross violations of truth, in Christians, would have been proclaimed to the universe by these very writers, as infamous desertions of principle and decency. Is it less infamous in themselves? All hypocrisy is detestable; but I know of none so detestable as that, which is coolly written, with full premeditation, by a man of talents, assuming the character of a moral and religious instructor, a minister, a prophet, of the truth of the Infinite God. Truth is a virtue perfectly defined, mathematically clear, and completely understood by all men of common sense. There can be no haltings between uttering truth and falsehood, no doubts, no mistakes; as between piety and enthusiasm, frugality and parsimony, generosity and profusion. Transgression, therefore, is always a known, definite, deliberate villainy. In the sudden moment of strong temptation, in the hour of unguarded attack, in the flutter and trepidation of unexpected alarm, the best man may, perhaps, be surprised into any sin; but he, who can coolly, of steady design, and with no unusual impulse, utter falsehood, and vend hypocrisy, is not far from finished depravity.

The morals of Rochester and Wharton need no comment. Woolston was a gross blasphemer. Blount solicited his sister in law to marry him, and, being refused, shot himself. Tindal was originally a protestant, then turned papist, then protestant again, merely to suit the times; and was at the same time infamous for vice in general, and the total want of principle. He is said to have died with this prayer in his mouth. "If there is a God, I desire that he may have mercy on me." Hobbes wrote his *Leviathan*, to serve the cause of Charles I.; but, finding him fail of success, he turned it to the defence of Cromwell, and made a merit of this fact to the Usurper: as Hobbes himself unblushingly declared to Lord Clarendon.* Morgan had no regard to truth; as is evident from his numerous falsifications of Scripture, as well as from the vile hypocrisy of professing himself a Christian in those very writings, in which he labours to destroy Christianity. Voltaire, in a letter

* See *Deism Revealed*.

now remaining, requested his friend D'Alembert to tell for him a direct and palpable lie, by denying, that he was the author of the Philosophical Dictionary. D'Alembert in his answer informed him, that he had told the lie.* Voltaire has, indeed, expressed his own moral character perfectly in the following words, "Monsieur Abbe, I must be read, no matter whether I am believed, or not." He also solemnly professed to believe the Catholic Religion, although at the same time he doubted the existence of a God. Hume died, as a fool dieth. The day before his death he spent in a pitiful and affected unconcern about this tremendous subject, playing at whist, reading Lucian's dialogues, and making silly attempts at wit, concerning his interview with Charon, the heathen ferry-man of Hades.†

It will easily be supposed that my information concerning the private lives of these men must be distant and imperfect: What has been said will, however, furnish any one at all acquainted with the human character, with just ideas of their morality. I shall only add that Rousseau (Jean Jacques) is asserted to have been guilty of gross theft, perjury, fornication, and adultery, and of abjuring and assuming, alternately, the Catholic, and the Protestant, religion; neither of which he believed.

Thus have I summarily exhibited to you the nature, and the actual state, of this Philosophy. From this view of it, I think you will unite with me in a full conviction, that, if the Gospel had been liable to so many and so serious objections, it would, instead of exciting and sustaining a controversy through eighteen centuries, have solicited the faith and obedience of mankind in vain, would have been smothered in its birth, and only added one to the numerous moral systems, which have, for ages, slept the sleep of death in the regions of oblivion.

* See Priestly On the Causes of the Increase of Infidelity.

† Smith's life of Hume.

SERMON XX.

THE NATURE AND DANGER OF INFIDEL PHILOSOPHY. SERMON II.

PREACHED TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE BACCALAUREATE
IN 1797.



COLOSSIANS ii. 8.

Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after CHRIST.

SECONDLY. I shall now endeavour to show you, that, vain and deceitful as this Philosophy is, both in its nature and in fact, you are still in danger of becoming a prey to it.

This danger will arise from several sources. I shall specify those which appear to me to be of chief importance.

I. You will be exposed to this danger from the arguments, brought by Philosophers against the Scriptures.

Infidels will probably triumph, and you may be surprised, to find Arguments mentioned as a source of danger. But your surprise and their triumph are both without foundation.

Wherever arguments are fairly adduced, and questions thoroughly explored by reasoning, there can be no danger to truth, or to the friends of truth; for in every such investigation, truth must have decisive advantages over falsehood. But questions are not always so explored, nor arguments always so adduced. Ingenious and able men are not always candid men, nor always desirous of

investigating or establishing truth. Their ingenuity is not unfrequently employed in obscuring, where it should illumine, and in perplexing, where it should clear. Ignorant persons may always be embarrassed by the reasonings of the learned and skilful, and those who are not versed in any subject of controversy, by studied champions.

Many readers of this Philosophy are ignorant; many impatient of thorough investigation, and accustomed to depend for their opinions on others; to be swayed by great and celebrated names, and implicitly to yield to high authority; and all are by nature inclined to their side of the question. Christianity is a system of restraint on every passion, and every appetite. Some it forbids entirely; and all it confines within limits, which by the mass of mankind, both learned and unlearned, will be esteemed narrow and severe. Philosophy, on the contrary, holds out, as you have already seen, a general license to every passion and appetite. Its doctrines therefore please of course; and find a ready welcome in the heart.

Mankind being thus prepared, it cannot be thought strange, that Infidel Philosophy, although destitute of a basis in truth, and of support from evidence, should present danger, even from arguments. Its great object is to unsettle every thing moral and obligatory, and to settle nothing. Objection is, therefore, its chief employment, and its only employment, in which danger can be found. Had it been engaged merely in devising moral systems of its own, it would have provoked no other answer from Common sense, than a stare, or a smile.

An objector will always find some advantages from the character, which he assumes. He finds advantages with respect to labour. A sentence will often express an obligation, which must be answered by a volume. He will find advantages in the nature of his disputation. The plainest and most undoubted truths may be forcibly assailed by objections, and by such as are obvious to a very limited understanding.

The objections against the Scriptures, which will be formidable, are chiefly derived from two sources.

1. The doctrines of the Scriptures are, and in the nature of the case must be, in several instances, mysterious. The doctrines of

the Scriptures are chiefly employed about the nature of Man, and the existence, character, designs, and will, of God. The first of these subjects, notwithstanding the laborious and ardent investigation of three thousand years, is still far from being satisfactorily explained. The daily inquiries and voluminous treatises of these very Philosophers, and the new views, which they continually attempt to exhibit, of this subject, prove the assertion to be true, in their opinion at least; and, were there a doubt remaining, a child could easily remove it; for a child can ask questions concerning human nature, which no Philosopher can answer. The last of these subjects, the existence, character, designs, and will, of God, is more mysterious than any other. Of both these subjects Revelation is a professed account; and as the subjects are in their nature mysterious, so the Revelation must, to consist with truth, be, in many respects, mysterious also. In such subjects difficulties may be easily and always found. As it is impossible, that we should thoroughly understand them, the parts, which we do not understand, will furnish difficulties respecting those, which we do. Of the nature of existence, substances, causality, and the mode of operation, we know little or nothing, even where creatures are the subjects of investigation. Of the Creator it may well be supposed, and must be acknowledged, that we know less than of creatures. Many particulars of these great subjects of the Scriptures must be unknown. Wherever we are ignorant, we cannot comprehend; and wherever we cannot comprehend, we can find many difficulties, much perplexity, and much doubt. A man of moderate talents will easily perceive, and forcibly represent, such difficulties; but no man can, in many cases, remove them. They can be removed only by the attainment of perfect knowledge of the subjects, and such knowledge can never be attained by man.

The difficulties, objected to the Scriptures on this score, all arise from what we know not, and not from what we know. Infidels do not show, that that, which is disclosed, is contrary to any thing, which we know, but merely that all is not disclosed, which we might wish to be disclosed, and which is necessary to a thorough comprehension of the subject. They do not show, that what is disclosed, and believed, is untrue, or improbable; but

that it is mysterious and incomprehensible ; in other words, that it contains things, which lie beyond the human capacity. This, instead of being a solid objection against the Revelation of the Scriptures, is a mere exposition of human ignorance. In this part of their conclusions there is no controversy between them and us.

The mysteriousness of the Scriptures, in several particulars, has been often directly as well as insidiously, objected against their divine origin. To me it appears to be a plain and powerful argument in favour of that origin. Were there nothing in Creation or Providence, which man could not comprehend, one important proof that they were works of God would be taken away. Were there nothing in Revelation, which man could not perfectly understand, a similar proof of its reality would be destroyed. What man can thus understand, man might, for ought that appears, have also devised.

Objections of this nature must, to possess any real force, arise from something which we know, and not from that of which we are ignorant. The things objected to ought to be inconsistent with something seen and understood ; otherwise whatever perplexity they may occasion in those, who dwell upon them, they can never produce rational conviction.

2. Another class of objects, against which similar objections have been made, is composed of facts, manners, and other local circumstances. The Scriptures, being written in a distant age, and country, record facts, which must in a considerable measure be connected with facts and circumstances, necessarily unknown by us ; and appeal to manners, customs, and other local circumstances, which must be equally unknown. The same difficulties may, therefore, be raised in this, as in the former case, and with the same success. In both cases our ignorance, and not the falsehood of the things declared, is the cause of the difficulties specified. By this I intend that a person perfectly acquainted with the things, stated in the Scriptures, and with all their appendages, would not only clearly discern the truth and propriety of the statement, but be able to explain its truth and propriety to our full satisfaction ; while, at the same time, the same person, being supposed to be as ignorant as ourselves, would find all the difficul-

tics in the statement, which are found by 'us. Still the statement is the same, and neither more nor less true, but is more or less explicable, as the person proposed is more or less informed.

Hence it is clear, that, although Christians should not be able to show *how* many facts, recorded in the Scriptures, took place, by what facts they were preceded or followed, what were their causes, attendants, or consequences, this furnishes no solid objection to the Scriptures as a Revelation. Every objection of this nature must, to be solid, contradict some known fact, and be attended with difficulties of some other nature than mere inexplicableness. If this be admitted as a proof of falsehood in writings, no ancient history can be believed.

A happy illustration of these sentiments and a strong proof of what may even now be done to throw light on this class of objects in the Scriptures, may be found in the first Volume of Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel history*. In this able and successful Work a system of facts impossible to be completely understood, unless developed in some such method, is unanswerably proved to be true.

The very same difficulties are found, and to a greater degree, in the Works, than in the Word, of God. Under the impressions, made by the former, the same men become atheists, who, under those made by the latter, became deists. Those, on the contrary, who require proofs, and inconsistencies with something known, to support or destroy, their belief, will admit the world to be the work, and the Scriptures to be the word, of God. So true is the declaration of the Committee of Public Instruction to the National Convention of France, that a Nation of Theists must of course become Revelationists.

This method of objecting to the Scriptures will make little impression on men disposed impartially and thoroughly to examine, and possessed of the proper means of examination. Still there is danger from it to you. Think not this a censure, or a proof of disesteem. You are young; you will find difficulties; you may be perplexed; you may doubt. Every difficulty you will not be able to remove. Such as you would be able to remove you will not always find the necessary time and means of removing. Inclination, industry, proper books, and able friends, may not be easily

found. Study, therefore, and in season, so far as you can, the evidences, by which Revelation is supported, and suffer nothing to destroy their force, or to unsettle your faith, unless it clearly opposes something, which is really known.

II. Another source of danger to you is the Confidence, with which most Philosophers assert their doctrines, and advance their arguments.

It is an unjust, yet it is a common conclusion of the mind, that confidence in asserting is as an argument of knowledge in the assertor. You have, doubtless, often heard observations like this. "He must know; or he would not assert so strongly and confidently." From the advantages of education, which you have enjoyed, I presume you have, however, adopted an opinion directly contrary to that above specified; and are all ready to say, that bold assertions, and confident airs of knowledge and wisdom, are of course suspicious; and that, instead of being influenced by them to believe the more readily, you should only be induced to doubt. Still let me inform you, there is danger to you from this source. Peremptory declarations, bold assurance, and that appearance of knowledge, which defies opposition, have ever had no small influence in gaining credit to the doctrines, which they were intended to support. Youths, unacquainted with the world, and with the arts and address which are used in it, and untaught, or taught only by books, that, usually, assertions are roundly made, because they are faintly believed by the assertor, as lies are commonly backed by oaths and curses, will not rarely imagine, that what is so plumply said must be true, or at least highly probable. This will happen especially, when the assertor is a man of talents and reputation. In such a man vanity is not expected to rule, prejudice to decide, nor arrogance to dictate. On the contrary, he is presupposed to examine with care, to assent only to evidence, and to assert from rational conviction. It would be happy, were this preconceived opinion verified by experience; but most unhappily no opinion is more fallacious. All the prejudices, which are found in ordinary men are often found in those of superior minds, and not unfrequently in higher degrees. To these they superadd, in many instances, that pride of talents, which operates to a groundless, deceitful, and let me add contemptible,

confidence in their own decisions, and a magisterial and oracular method of communicating them to mankind. Suspect these appearances, therefore, wherever you find them, and remember, that confidence of assertion, and airs of triumph, infer not any certainty in the opinion declared.

III. Another source of the danger specified is found in the various methods, used by Philosophers to persuade their readers, that their opinions are embraced by the great body of mankind, especially of the ingenious and learned.

It is a remarkable fact in the History of man, that vice has always claimed a superiority over virtue, irreligion and unbelief over faith. In common life, no sooner does a man enter boldly upon the practice of vice and licentiousness, than he arrogates to himself a character superior to that of his sober companions, and to his own former character. A loose man rarely speaks concerning one, of more worth, without evident proofs of conscious superiority. Virtue, itself, if you will take the pains to examine, will be found to be, in his view, the weak and inferior part of his neighbour's character, and vice the great and superior ingredient in his own. According to this method of estimation, Satan, as described in the Scriptures, is the most respectable being in the universe.

The superiority, claimed by Infidels over Believers, is not less unfounded; even if we admit what few Christians would probably admit, viz. that its foundation is not exactly the same. Christians believe, that the Scriptures are, and Infidels that they are not, a divine Revelation. Neither they, nor we, know; both classes merely believe; for the case admits not of knowledge, nor can it be determined with certainty. The only question, to be decided between the contending parties, is which believes on the best evidence. Infidels are believers equally with Christians, and merely believe the contrary position. That faith therefore, which is best supported, is the most rational, and ought to confer the superiority of character.

At the present time, a new engine is abundantly employed to establish this distinction in favour of Infidels. It is boldly asserted, that the world has hitherto lain in a state of ignorance and infancy; that it has been chained by authority, and influenced by

superstition, but that it has, at the present time, broken at once its bonds, roused itself into manly exertion, and seized intuitively upon the whole system of truth, moral, political, and natural. Of this mighty and propitious change in the affairs of man Infidel Philosophers claim to be the sole authors. Hence the character of ingenious and learned is challenged as being in a sense their exclusive property.

I cheerfully admit, Young Gentlemen, that many Infidels have been ingenious men; that some of them have been learned men; and that a few of them have been great men. Hume, Tindal, and a few others, have been distinguished for superior strength of mind, Bolingbroke for eloquence of the pen, Voltaire for brilliancy of imagination, and various others for respectable talents of different kinds. But I am wholly unable to form a list of Infidels, which can, without extreme disadvantage, be compared with the two Bacons, Erasmus, Cumberland, Stillingfleet, Grotius, Locke, Butler, Newton, Boyle, Berkeley, Milton, Johnson, &c. In no walk of genius, in no path of knowledge, can Infidels support a claim to superiority, or equality with Christians.

Nor am I less ready to acknowledge, that ingenious men have lately made, and are still making, many improvements in science and in arts. Unhappy would it indeed be, if, after all the advances of preceding ages, the present should be unable to advance at all; if no additional truth should be discovered, and no erroneous opinion detected. But what, let me ask, would have been our situation, had these and many other able men, of past ages, never lived? How much of all, which we know, is contained in their works, and derived solely from their talents and labours? Can it be just, can it be decent, to forget the hand that feeds us, and to treat with contempt those, without whose assistance we should have been savages and blockheads?

That the world has materially changed, and is still changing, in many important particulars, cannot be questioned; but whether these particulars are either profitable, or honourable, may well be questioned. That the knowledge, or the happiness, of mankind has been increased by the change is yet to be proved. We have not yet put off the harness, and our time for rational *boasting* is, therefore, not arrived. When some of the favourite

dogmas of modern times have been better supported by arguments, and received a more auspicious sanction from experience, there will be evidence in their favour, which hitherto has not appeared.

You will easily see, from what has been said, that, when Infidel Philosophy is asserted to be embraced by the great body of the learned and ingenious, nothing more is intended, than to assert the superior character of Infidels to Christians; not a superiority arising from native talents, or from attainments, but from Infidelity. It is not intended, that learned and ingenious Christians have been convinced and become Infidels, but that Christians are of course destitute of learning and ingenuity; and Infidels of course possessed of both. The real weight of this argument I leave to your decision.

Allowing, however, the whole of what is thus asserted, no argument will be furnished by it against Christianity. The most extensive prevalence of a system is no proof of its truth. Heathenism formerly overspread the world, and numbered, as its votaries, nearly all the learned and unlearned of the human race. Was it therefore, a system of truth? The Aristotelian Philosophy prevailed among all the learned men in Europe, for two thousand years. Would you, therefore, embrace it? When Galileo received the Copernican system, almost all the learned and unlearned disbelieved it. Was it therefore false?

When Christianity first began its progress, it could boast of only twelve poor, uneducated men as its champions, with perhaps less than one thousand followers. By the labours of this little band it overturned, in less than three centuries, most of the superstition, power, policy, learning, and philosophy, of the known world. By the labours of Luther, Melancthon, Zuingle, and Calvin, it rose again from extreme depression, in the face, and against the strength, of the most formidable power, which the world has ever seen. Should it again return to the same depression, it will again rise on the ruins of all its enemies. Every promise, made to Christians, has been hitherto exactly fulfilled. Those, which respect periods yet to come, will receive the same faithful completion.

Yet such is the character of man, and especially in his youth,

that you will feel the influence of this triumphant assertion. You will feel, at times, in danger of being left alone, and at least of being deserted and opposed by genius and knowledge; and will naturally shrink from a combat, in which skill, strength, and numbers are imagined to be enrolled on the side of the enemy. I have only to observe further, that your choice of Christianity will not be less wise, because numbers oppose it, nor your salvation less complete, because it is not obtained by Infidels.*

IV. Another source of this danger is the Contempt and Ridicule, with which Christianity is opposed.

Contempt is the spirit, and ridicule the weapon, with which Christianity has long been principally opposed. In this Lord Shaftesbury led the way; or, perhaps more properly, he gave a peculiar countenance and support to this method of attacking Christianity, by advancing the remarkable opinion, that Ridicule is the test of Truth. In pursuing this doctrine he himself is unwarily led to declare, that this very Ridicule must be brought to the test of Reason, or Argument. The whole train of Infidel Philosophers, whatever may have been their opinion, have harmonized with him in the practice. Voltaire, who regarded all means alike, provided they would aid the accomplishment of his own ends, writes thus to his friend, D'Alembert, "Render those pedants, (i. e. divines) as enormously ridiculous as you can. Ridicule will do every thing. It is the strongest of all weapons. A bon mot is as good a thing as a good book."

I do not deny, that ridicule may be properly used in certain cases; but I wholly deny the propriety of using it to decide any serious concern of mankind. A proud and vain man will always affect and express contempt for all, who differ from him, and especially for those, who oppose him; and for all the arguments, adduced against his opinions, especially for those, which he is unable to confront with arguments of superior force. But pride and vanity are foolish passions, and uniformly lessen the ability of a man either to discover, or to receive, moral truth. Prejudice is proverbially acknowledged to be a potent hindrance to the dis-

* To young men inclining to Infidelity I beg leave to recommend a careful, and serious consideration, of two passages of Scripture; one Heb. vi. 4—8; the other, Heb. x. 26—31.

covery, and the reception, of truth ; and pride begets the strongest of all prejudices. In itself it is gross misjudging, mistake, and folly ; and in its effects it involves a host of follies and mistakes. Hence the Wisest of all men, from profound acquaintance with the nature of man, has declared, that “ the Rod of pride is in the mouth of the foolish.”

The cause, which needs these weapons, cannot be just ; the doctrine, which cannot be supported without them, must be false. All men, when pressed with argument, and trembling through fear of being convicted of error, resort, of course, to such means of defence, or of attack, as are in their power. When reasons fail, ridicule is still left ; and he who cannot disprove, can still inquire with arrogance and disdain, “ What will this Babbler say ? ” Over the cool and modest opponent he will feel a superiority of spirit, if not of argument ; and will quit the field with the stride of triumph, and the consciousness of that victory, for which he contended. His capital object is attained. He has not, it is true, repelled his adversary ; but he has claimed a triumph over him ; he has not defended his own ground ; but he has not been forced to acknowledge himself defeated.

Unworthy and unsatisfying as this method of attacking Christianity appears, and in spite of the strong presumptions against a cause, which has ever needed and resorted to it, you will find no small danger from these very weapons. You will dread to become the objects of scorn, and to be wounded by the shafts of derision. You will be afraid to declare yourselves friends to a cause, which has been the standing jest of so many men of wit, and which has been so often and so publicly holden up to systematized contempt ; to which insult is merit, and mockery a fashion.

Young, novices in human affairs, doubtful of your own strength, partially acquainted with this great controversy, ardently coveting esteem, and trembling at the approach of disreputation, you will need no common share of fortitude, no frequent degree of self-command, to stand the shock, to examine the true character of the contending parties, and to discern the real nature of the conflicting causes. Could you assume this fortitude, and accomplish this examination, the danger would vanish ; but you will be

assailed so often, and so powerfully, that, perplexed before by the arguments, which I have mentioned, you will be in imminent hazard of yielding yourselves a prey, to avoid the fatigues of an arduous and unremitted contest, and to shun the assaults of an enemy, who, not only points his arrows with steel, but dips them in poison.

V. Another source of this danger is the actual Bias of the world towards Infidelity.

The natural propensity of man, as exhibited by the Scriptures, and as proved by all experience, is a propensity to sin. The conviction of this truth has spread through mankind, in every age, and in every country. Their religions have all been steadily employed to expiate it, their laws and education to restrain it, their conversation and their histories to recount its effects. Sin and Infidelity are mutually causes and effects. Sin demands and prompts to Infidelity, as its justification; Infidelity warrants, encourages, and defends sin. Sin derives its peace and security from Infidelity; Infidelity its reception, support, and friends, from sin. Thus, in every age, there is a natural bias in man to infidelity.

This bias possesses, at different periods, different degrees of strength. Numbers, men in power, men of popular characters, men of great talents, contribute, by turns, to the general currency of vice, or virtue, of truth, or falsehood. From these and various other causes, it becomes fashionable, at times, to be grave, decent, moral, and even religious; and, at times, to be dissolute, licentious, and gross.

The fashionable bias of the present time will be readily acknowledged to be unfavourable to Christianity. Beside the influence of a long progress in vice, since the Reformation, and the revival of Religion consequent upon it, a progress loudly proclaimed by Infidels, as well as by Christians; beside the influence of all the incessant attacks, made upon Religion and Virtue by Philosophers; the present singular convulsion of Europe has had a most malignant efficacy on this subject. At no period has the human mind discovered such impatience of moral restraint, broken with so bold a hand the bonds of duty, or defied in such haughty terms morals, religion, and the government of God.

Were the present a proper occasion, it would be easy to show the connection between such a convulsion and the general demoralization of the human race, the depression of virtue, and the subversion of human happiness. Suffice it to say, here, that, did not the evil furnish a cure, from its own bowels, did it not prove, by what it has already effected, that, within a little period of its progress, it will, if unrestrained, convert man into a savage, and the world into a desert, its final mischief to the cause of Christianity could not be calculated. Circumstanced as it is, it has filled every Christian, every friend of the human race, every sober man, with serious alarms, not for the permanence of Christianity, but for the continuance of peace, the safety of every right, and the existence of every valuable interest.

In your own country the effects of this convulsion, and the strength of this bias, are less perceived. Here the friends of Revelation greatly outnumber its enemies. But even here the evil in a degree exists. Nor will its influence probably be small. The report will, in some measure, affect you from abroad. At home, you will see one decent or doubtful person, and another, sliding slowly down the declivity of irreligion, and many, more heedless, or more daring, leaping at once into the gulph beneath. Here, a companion will turn his back, and walk no more with Christ. There, a Parent, or Instructor, will forsake him, having loved the present world. Among these will frequently be found the gay, the pleasing, and the accomplished; and in some instances, the grave, the learned, and the honourable. On one side, the temptation will charm; on the other it will sanction. Allured, awed, supported, perhaps without a friend at hand to pluck you by the arm, or to point to you either the danger or the means of escaping it, it can scarcely be hoped, that none of you will be destroyed. Most of the Infidels, whom I have known, have fallen a sacrifice to this cause, or to the fear of ridicule.

VI. A greater source of this danger, than any which has been mentioned, is a natural Bias in your own hearts against Christianity.

You, like the rest of men, are naturally attached to the pleasures of sin, to the unlawful gratifications of passion and appetite.

Whatever indulges this attachment will be regarded by you with complacency; whatever restrains it, however necessarily, or usefully, will be viewed with pain. The most powerful, the most universal, the most constantly felt, the most difficult to be escaped, of all such restraints, is the system of doctrines, contained in the Scriptures. Civil Government, in a different manner, is employed in promoting the same end, and, at times, operates with a superior efficacy. But its influence is felt only within certain limits, and on particular occasions; whereas the Scriptures extend their influence to every place, time, and action, seek out the offender in solitude, as well as in crowds, sound the alarm at midnight, as well as in the open day, enter into the recesses of the bosom, watch the rising sin, and threaten the guilty purpose, while it is yet a shapeless embryo. Hence, more than Civil Government itself, it has been maligned, and combated, by licentious men.

The restraints of Christianity you, like others, will, at times, feel with impatience and pain. From this impatience will naturally spring wishes to free yourselves from companions so intrusive and troublesome; and such wishes will naturally terminate in attempts to accomplish this freedom. Of all means to this end the most obvious, the most easy, the most effectual, is disbelief. To disbelief, therefore, you will be strongly inclined; and much care, resolution, and fidelity to yourselves, will be necessary to resist the influence, and avert the danger, of this inclination.

In this and in every case, in which man is placed, assistance may be given, the mind may be strengthened, and safety may be obtained, by the proper use of such means, as are furnished by the Providence of God. From me, with more propriety than from most others, you may justly expect such assistance. To you I stand in a near, important, and parental relation. I have gone before you through the same course, have felt the same danger, and have been strongly tempted by means of them to yield myself a prey to this unhappy Philosophy. I cannot, therefore, be indifferent to the dangers of others, especially of you, my pupils, my children. Nor can I be more properly employed, on this the last opportunity allowed me of rendering to you my of-

ficial duty, than in endeavouring in so interesting a case to communicate to you the means of strength and safety. This, you will remember, was the

Third thing, proposed in this discourse, viz. to attempt to dissuade you from yielding yourselves a prey to this Philosophy.

Many dissuasives from this conduct are, I trust, already suggested to you in the account, already given of this Philosophy. A reception of such doctrines, and an union with such men, cannot be supposed as rational, or expedient. No one of you would, in a cool moment of deliberation, consent either to such belief, or to such conduct. It will be yours to decide, that your judgment shall not bow to inclination and prejudice.

In addition to the dissuasives already suggested let me urge, in the

I. Place, as a strong reason to prevent you from embracing Infidel Philosophy, its continually changing character.

Truth is, at all times, and with respect to all things, of an unchangeable nature. Every change of doctrines furnishes intuitive certainty, that either the doctrine which is renounced, or the doctrine which is assumed, is false. This changeable character is eminently the character of this Philosophy. Among the ancients it was a mere wind of doctrine, varying through all the points of the compass. Among the moderns, also, it has, cameleon-like, appeared of many colours. Lord Herbert published it under the form of Natural Religion. This he insisted on, in strong and solemn terms, as a sum of duties indispensable; and declared, that men were wholly accountable for the discharge of them, and that according to their fulfilment, or neglect, of them they would be judged and rewarded. Yet even *he* sapped the foundation of his whole system, by undermining moral obligation, and removing guilt from sin. Him several succeeding writers appeared, in a degree, and at times, disposed to follow; but even they, with most others, fell speedily into mere Infidelity: i. e. they believed neither Natural nor Revealed Religion. Of course, they left themselves without law, obligation, or duty. The system now became a system of mere objection. According to it, Christianity was false, and nothing else was true: i. e. they substituted nothing, as a rule of duty, in its place. In the mean time, they

in a degree, and their followers in a greater degree, by insinuation, assertion, and argument, justified the indulgences of passion and appetite, and exhibited them as the true, the chief, and even the only, good of man. From this, which may be called the Animal system of Morals, the next gradation was the doctrine of the Pyrrhonists and New Academics, usually termed Scepticism. This was the favourite doctrine of Mr. Hume, and is exhibited by him as the summit of human attainments. Nor did the contradiction, which attends the very reception of this doctrine, at all startle his sagacious mind, shocked as it was by the bare idea of a miracle. From this step but one advancement remained, viz. downright Atheism. This is now the most general, and the most approved, Infidel Philosophy. "Deism," says a modern Infidel writer, "is but the first step of Reason out of Superstition (i. e. out of Revealed Religion.) No person remains a Deist, but through want of Reflection, timidity, passion, or obstinacy. Time, experience, and an impartial examination of our ideas, will undeceive us," (i. e. make us Atheists.) "The Supreme Being," says Anacharsis Cloots (the Reporter of the Committee of Public Instruction to the French National Convention) in an official Report of that Committee, "the Eternal Being, is no other than Nature uncreated and uncreatable; and the only Providence is the Association of mankind in freedom and equality. Man, when free, wants no other Divinity than himself. Reason dethrones both the Kings of the earth, and the Kings of heaven. No Monarchy above, if we wish to preserve our republic below. Volumes have been written to determine whether a republic of Atheists could exist. I maintain, that every other republic is a chimera. If you once admit the existence of a heavenly Sovereign, you introduce the wooden horse within your walls! What you adore by day will be your destruction at night. A people of Theists will necessarily become Revelationists." Thus the great body of Lord Herbert's followers espouse and maintain doctrines, which he declared to be incapable of being received by any man, who deserved the name of a rational being.

But all these things cannot be true. If Natural Religion be truth, then Scepticism cannot be truth: the Animal system cannot be truth; mere Infidelity cannot be truth; Atheism cannot be

truth. The very face of this Philosophy is, therefore, suspicious. The features are not parts of the same countenance, and, when seen together, present even to the glancing eye, instead of beauty and loveliness, an incongruous and forbidding deformity.

The variance of this Philosophy is by no means confined to the account, already given. Each of these forms furnishes many diversities and changes. Atheism itself is exhibited under many appearances. As a total denial of God, it is now the atomic, or Epicurean system of things brought together by an eternal conatus, or endeavour, towards exertion, casually acting at a particular unknown period. It is the eternal existence of the world in its present form, and an eternal succession of human generations. It is a system of chemical and mechanical operations of matter on such an eternal world, which by a happy and mysterious energy, at some lucky moment, gave birth to thought and volition, which, by a concurrence of circumstances equally lucky, have since continued themselves. It is the volcanic system, by which suns were emitted from a distant unknown mass, the matrix of the Universe; worlds from suns, and continents and their furniture from worlds. As partial Atheism, it is Scepticism. It is an admission of the being of God, and a denial of his Attributes. It is an admission of his being, and a denial of his Providence. It is a denial of a future state of Man. It is an acknowledgment of the world, or of fire, or of all the elements, or of an unknown *Anima mundi*, or soul of the Universe, as God. In a word, it is any thing, and every thing, rather than an acknowledgment of the One, Infinite, and All-perfect JEHOVAH.

In all these, and in all other, systems of Infidel Philosophy, the difficulties and embarrassments to faith are lessened neither in number, nor in degree. On the contrary, they are multiplied, and enhanced, beyond calculation. The usual course of the controversy has been this. Infidels have uniformly attacked, and Christians merely defended; Infidels have found difficulties, and Christians have employed themselves merely, or chiefly, in removing them. Hence Infidels have naturally felt, and written, as if the difficulties lay solely on the Christian side of the debate. Had Christians, with more worldly wisdom carried their arms into the fortresses of their antagonists, they would long since, and very

easily, have proved them to be every where weak and untenable, the sheds only, and pens, of occasional marauders.

In embracing such a Philosophy what satisfaction can be found, what resting place for the mind? To Philosophers it has plainly furnished none; for they have retreated, and wandered, from one residence to another; and have thus proved, that they have discovered no place, where they could permanently and comfortably abide. *You* will feel even more unsettled. You feel that you are rational and immortal, that your interests are therefore immense and inestimable, and that an effectual provision for them demands, and will repay, every care, and every exertion. To a mind, thus circumstanced, uncertainty is corroding and intolerable; and from a system thus fluctuating nothing but uncertainty can be gained, or hoped. Wretched must be the condition of that mind, which, labouring with intense anxiety to discover a peaceful rest for an unsatisfied conscience, and a final home at the close of a weary pilgrimage, finds within the horizon of its view nothing but a structure built of clouds, variable in its form, and shadowy in its substance, gay indeed with a thousand brilliant colours, and romantic with all the fantastical diversities of shape, but bleak, desolate, and incapable of being inhabited.

II. This Philosophy presents no efficacious means of restraining Vice, or promoting Virtue; but on the contrary encourages Vice and discourages Virtue.

I have already considered this subject at some length, as the Philosophers themselves and their disciples were concerned. As every person may not transfer the argument from them to himself, or to others, it may be useful to see this application made, and with a degree of particularity.

All Virtue is summed up in Piety to God, justice, truth, and kindness to our fellow-men, and the government of our own passions and appetites, commonly called self-government, or self-denial. All Vice is comprised in the dispositions and conduct opposite to these. The only possible encouragements to Virtue are either the pleasure which Virtue gives, or the rewards which it promises. The only restraints upon Vice are the pain which it produces, or the punishment with which it is threatened.

That Piety is not encouraged by this Philosophy will scarcely

need to be proved. A great proportion of Infidel Philosophers deny the existence of God, and thus expunge not only the obligation, but the possibility, of being pious.

Mr. Hobbes says that all Religion is ridiculous.

Mr. Blount objects to prayer as a duty.

Lord Shaftesbury asserts that Salvation is a ridiculous thing.

Doctor Tindal, that every Man must form rules of duty for himself, and that these must vary as circumstances vary.

Mr. Chubb, that all Religions are alike, and that it is of no consequence what Religion a man embraces; and he allows not the least room to believe,

That dependence on God's Providence, trust in him, and resignation to him, are any parts of duty, or Religion.

Mr. Hobbes asserts, that that, which is not matter, is nothing.

Mr. Blount insinuates, that there are two independent and eternal Beings; one good, the other evil.

Mr. Hume, that there is no reason to believe that the Universe proceeded from a Cause;

That it is unreasonable to believe God infinitely wise and good;

That what we believe to be a perfection in God may be a defect.

Lord Bolingbroke, that God is possessed of no moral Attribute discoverable by us;

That God did not determine the existence of particular men; and

That God concerns not himself with the affairs of men; or, if he does, he only regards collective bodies of men, and not individuals.

Here we see it directly taught, that if there be a God, matter is the only God; that there is no evidence, that the Universe proceeded from a Cause; and that it is unreasonable to believe it; that God has no discoverable moral perfection; that what we call moral perfections, such as holiness, truth, justice, and goodness, may be mere defects; that God concerns not himself with the affairs or conduct of individual men, and of course not with the affairs of communities; that he does not even determine their existence; and of course as we came into existence without him.

we have nothing to do with him. We are also taught, that Salvation is ridiculous, that prayer is a fault, or sin, that dependence, trust, and resignation, are no parts of Religion, and that all Religions are alike. Of course we are taught, that there is rationally no such thing as piety; no such thing as a God, the object of piety; or if there is, that there is no evidence to prove his existence; and, if this be given up, that he is not a moral being; neither just, sincere, good, or holy; of course that he is destitute of all amiableness, all desert of love, or veneration. To close the scheme, we are informed that all religions are alike, equally estimable, equally rational, equally useful: that the Religion of Carthage, and of all other Heathen countries, which demanded and sanctioned the butchery of human hecatombs; the Religion of Egypt, which prostrated millions of reasonable beings before a calf, a cat, a crocodile, a duck, a frog, a rat, a leek, or an onion; the Religion of Babylon, of Paphos, and of Hindostan, which prostituted annually, as an act of solemn public worship, virgins and matrons innumerable to the casual lust of every traveller, or to the stated brutism of a herd of lechers, selected for the pollution; that the worship of an adulterer, a strumpet, a butcher, or a thief; is the same with the pure and spiritual worship of the Infinite and Eternal Jehovah, the only Great, the only Wise, the only Good, and with the Religion, which prompts to love him with all the heart and soul, and strength, and understanding, and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

The manner, in which Infidel Philosophy has regarded truth, justice, and kindness to our fellow-men, will be easily shown from their own declarations also.

Mr. Hobbes asserts, that a Ruler is not bound by any obligation of truth, or justice, to his subjects, and that he can do no wrong;

That a man, believing Christ in his heart, may lawfully deny him before the magistrate;

That every Man has a right to all things, and may lawfully get them by force if he can.

Lord Shaftesbury, that the hope of rewards, and the fear of punishments, is noxious to virtue, and takes away all motives to it (Of course, so far as civil government operates on man, it is nox

ious to virtue, and takes away all motives to it. Yet Mr. Hobbes makes obedience to Government, through fear, the only virtue, or right conduct.)

Mr. Hume supports the lawfulness of suicide on this, as one principal ground, that it cannot be opposed to the will of God, because it takes place. Of course, whatever takes place is conformable to the will of God. Falsehood, therefore, injustice, murder, revenge, tyranny, fraud, and every other crime, are conformable to the will of God, for they all take place.

Lord Bolingbroke teaches, that Ambition, the Lust of Power, Avarice, and Sensuality, may all be lawfully gratified, if they can be safely gratified.

Voltaire requests D'Alembert to tell in his behalf a direct falsehood.

D'Alembert informs Voltaire, that he has told this falsehood.

In these opinions, truth, justice, and kindness, to our fellow-men, are plainly destroyed, the obligation to them wholly removed, and every violation of them justified. If a man may utter falsehood, where Religion, or a friend, is concerned, he may lawfully utter it on every occasion, and to every person. If all have a right to all things, none can do any wrong. If that which takes place, is right because it takes place, wrong cannot take place. If ambition, the lust of power, avarice, and sensuality, may be lawfully gratified, when they can be safely gratified, all crimes against our fellow-men may be lawfully perpetrated, because all, which are called crimes of this nature, are merely gratifications of one or other of these passions.

Let us now examine the manner, in which these Philosophers have considered self-government.

Lord Herbert declares, that men are not hastily, or on small grounds, to be condemned, who sin by bodily constitution; and

That the indulgence of lust and anger is no more to be blamed, than the thirst occasioned by the dropsy, or the sleepiness produced by the Lethargy.

Mr. Hobbes, that a man may lawfully get all things if he can.

Doctor Tindal, that every man must form for himself his rule of moral conduct, and change it as his circumstances change.

Mr. Hume, that Female Infidelity, when known, is a small thing, when unknown, nothing ;

That Adultery must be practised, if we would obtain all the advantages of life ;

That pride and self-valuation are virtues ;

That self-denial and humility are not virtues, but useless and mischievous ; that they harden the heart, stupefy the understanding, and sour the temper.

Lord Bolingbroke teaches that the sole foundation of modesty, is a vain desire of showing ourselves superior to mere animals.

That Adultery, Incest, Polygamy, and lewdness of every kind and degree, except incest between the nearest relations, are warranted by the Law, or Religion, which he considers as the only Religion, or Law, of mankind, &c. &c.

These and the preceding declarations clearly and directly authorize the full indulgence of every passion and appetite, and annihilate the existence of crime, and the possibility of virtue. Yet all these are solemnly taught as rules of life, and as parts of the will of the Infinite God.

But this is not all. They have eventually taught the same things, in assertions less direct, and yet by irresistible implication supporting the same conduct. The doctrine, that a Man is an animal, or that he is a machine, is a complete subversion of morality. No man ever believed an ox, a mill, or a coach-wheel, to be a moral being. The same effects are produced by the light and indifferent manner, in which moral subjects are regarded in many doctrines of these Philosophers : as, when civil law is made the sole foundation of right and wrong, the magistrate the sole judge of religious truth, and the sole source of religious obligation, as by Hobbes and Shaftesbury ; and when health, taper legs, and broad shoulders are declared to be virtues by Hume.

In these and other similar declarations Philosophers clearly prove, that they are wholly indifferent to vice and virtue, sin and holiness, and to all their amazing effects. This indifference they hold out in a thousand forms, and with respect to the great body of moral principles. No sentiment is more insinuating than this. None more insensibly, or surely, steals upon the heart ; none

more thoroughly depraves the character; none more certainly conducts to misery and ruin.

The same wretched consequence is fatally derived from the ridicule, which they cast upon every thing religious, virtuous, or serious.

Unsatisfied, however, with all these efforts, and convinced, that a future state of man must, if it exist, be a state of reward to virtue, and of punishment to sin; that, if there be a God, he must be present to see every sin, and every virtue, and disposed to reward the one, and punish the other; and that, of course, there must be a judgment, and a recompense; they have applied themselves, with an industry worthy of a better cause, to overthrow the belief, and terminate the existence, of these truths.

Thus Mr. Hobbes declares, that that, which is not matter, is nothing.

Mr. Blount, that the Soul is probably material.

Lord Shaftesbury, that the hope of reward, and the fear of punishment, cannot consist with virtue.

Mr. Collins, that the Soul is material and mortal.

Mr. Chubb, that the arguments for the immortality of the Soul are wholly unsatisfactory, and that it is probably material; and

That men will not be judged for their impiety, or ingratitude, to God; nor for their injustice, or unkindness, to each other; but only for injuries to the public; and

That even this is uncertain, and useless;

Mr. Hume, that the Soul of man is a machine; and that it is unreasonable to believe an Intelligent cause of all things, &c.

Lord Bolingbroke, that God does not concern himself with the affairs of men at all; or if he does, he regards only collective bodies of men;

That he punishes none but through the magistrate; and

That the Soul is material and mortal.

And the National Convention of France,

That death is an eternal sleep.

Thus by Infidel Philosophy is every hope taken away from Virtue, and every fear from Vice, however multiplied, or abandoned. This has indeed been the sum of all the purposes of this Philosophy. The belief and the hope of future rewards, and the

belief and the dread of future punishments, are the substance of all which they call superstition. To remove these from men, and especially the latter, they have studied and laboured most assiduously for ages.

Should they succeed to the extent of their wishes, what must be the consequences? Men will be left with all the instructions concerning the lawfulness of vice, which have been recited, and innumerable others of the same nature, given by these, and the whole train of Philosophers; with all the proofs of the insignificance and the non-existence of virtue; with the general license to plunder, to defraud, to deceive, and to pollute; and with no other restraint but civil law, or private honour: Law, which cannot know one, in a hundred, of the crimes, which men commit: Honour, which even in a Christian state of society, sustained by many virtuous men, and strengthened by prevailing moral opinions auspicious to virtue and alarming to vice, will not either restrain, or regard, one crime in a thousand: Honour, which, in the state of Society thus accomplished, amidst rulers, Philosophers, and other men of influence, thoroughly initiated in these doctrines, and amidst the universal depravity of communities, would know no distinction between virtue and convenience, between crimes and disagreeables. How soon would law and government lose that authority and energy which are now chiefly sustained by appeals to the presence, the will, and the agency, of a Ruler all present, all powerful, and unchangeably and infinitely opposed to every iniquity? How soon would man, ceasing to reverence his God, cease to regard his neighbour? How soon would every moral, every natural, tie be dissolved, every motive to justice, truth, and benevolence, be lost, and every attempt to confine passion and appetite within any bounds be forgotten? Virtue and Vice, as objects of human esteem, would change their places, and their characters. Pride would then be real virtue, the Lust of power real greatness, and Avarice real honour. The seat of Justice would be the nest of plunder and robbery, and the edifices of learning cells of studied iniquity, where methodized sin would be the science, and sagacious perpetration the art. The private dwelling would be converted into a brothel, and the venerable matron and the snowy virgin would change characters with the

bawd and the strumpet; and the purity, the happiness, and the hopes, of mankind, would be buried under a promiscuous and universal concubinage.

Were Philosophy less exceptionable in its doctrines, and less favourably inclined to vice, still, in its attempts to restrain vice, and encourage virtue, it would be totally weak and inefficacious. Every Individual Philosopher utters many errors with the same breath and in the same discourse, in which he utters also some truths. Every individual contradicts, ridicules, and calumniates, every other individual; and every sect every other sect. Thus truth and falsehood come from the same mouth with equal gravity and force; and the contrary systems of the combatants, are on the one hand, derived from sources equally respectable, and, on the other, are equally the objects of obloquy and derision, mutually and successfully employed. As teachers, they have no authority, possess no power, can employ no sanction, and promise no reward. The only support of their systems is argument; often so abstruse, as to be understood imperfectly by themselves, and not at all by most men; often so weak and futile, as to produce no effect, beside contempt and ridicule; often so opposed by contrary arguments, as to be left without force, or influence; and always so uninteresting as to be neither read, nor regarded, by the body of mankind. This support their example effectually destroys; for no man will believe, that the Philosophy, which when heartily embraced does not render its author better, but leaves him worse, than multitudes of those, who are without it, can be either useful or true.

The single phrase—Thus saith the Lord,—comes home to every serious man, with a force infinitely greater than that of all which Philosophers have ever said, or will ever say. The Teacher, here, can neither be deceived, nor deceive. His authority to enjoin, his knowledge to discern, his disposition and his power to reward obedience is immutable and boundless. Here something is presented to the mind, of sufficient importance to arrest its attention, to rouse its hopes, and to command its efforts. To disobedience the same attributes present a combination of motives, efficacious to alarm, and to deter. In the full view of

these attributes, sin is perpetrated only with a trembling hand, and an aching heart.

But in spite of all the efforts, which Philosophy can make to dissuade men from vice, the single human conclusion will ever be, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Some of the ancients, at times, made efforts of this nature; but they were sickly in their origin, and momentary in their operations; without energy, and without effect; an amusement to the fancy, but not a melioration of the heart. The modern Philosophy, uninterested in the subject, or discouraged by the attempts of its predecessors, has joined in the general cry, and determined to encourage and sanction this limited pursuit of good. Its doctrines, its arguments, its examples, have licensed and defended guilty pleasure, pleasure confined to the present life, the pleasure of sinners, the pleasure of animals. Before its pestilential breath, as man before the Simoom of Nubia, truth, virtue, and happiness, have sickened, fallen, and died; while vice, like the fabled Upaz of Java, has in the same rank atmosphere vigorously diffused its branches, shot up its infant stems, and corrupted and destroyed, around it, whatever had the principles or the promise of life.

3. Infidel Philosophy has not hitherto been able to support itself, nor to make any serious impression on the evidence of the Divine Origin of the Scriptures.

The great proofs of the divine origin of the Scriptures have not, I apprehend, been at all seriously affected by the attacks of Infidels. The Necessity of admitting the History of the Scriptures, and the necessity of admitting the Revelation of the Scriptures, arising from the admission of the Scriptural History; The Arguments from Prophecy; from Miracles; from the Character of Christ; from the Origination of the New Testament by uneducated men; from the Character and Conduct of the Apostles; from the erection and progress of Christianity; from the Authenticity and Genuineness of the Scriptures; from their pure, harmonious, and sublime Character; and from the present state of the Jews; have in no instance been solidly answered.

There is not, so far as I have been informed, any answer of any Infidel to a capital argument in support of Revelation, which has

gained so great applause, or received, for the time, so general and confident reliance from Philosophers, as Mr. Hume's celebrated Essay on Miracles. In the Introduction to it, Mr. Hume says, "*He flatters himself, he has discovered an argument, which will prove an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion.*" But since the Essays on the same subject by Adams, Campbell, Farmar and Price, have been published, and read, the applause and the reliance appear to be in a great measure withdrawn. I have been informed, that Mr. Hume himself considered Doctor Campbell's Answer to him as conclusive against him. If this most ingenious performance of the ablest Infidel, by far the ablest, who has hitherto appeared, has been so impotent to its purpose, the sufficiency of the rest may be easily determined.

There is, also, another argument, drawn from the comparative character of Christians, and Infidels, which may be alleged with a force, incapable of being obviated. The weight of virtue has been wholly on the side of Christianity. All moral truth is fairly tried by its influence on mankind. Nothing can be more properly or more forcibly contrasted, than the tendency of the doctrines of the Scriptures, and the tendency of Infidel Philosophy; and nothing can more strongly illustrate this contrast, than the opposite lives of Christians and Infidels. The life of St. Paul, alone, puts all Infidelity out of countenance. The early Christians in general, even as represented by many of their most respectable enemies, have no parallels in the annals of Infidelity. From the infancy of the Christian church to the present time, in all periods some, and in most periods many, Christians have worn the same character. In our own land, and in every neighbourhood, may be found daily those, who adorn the human name with all the virtues, which Infidels have at any time professed, and with many of a superior kind, to which they have never formed a pretension. So evident is the want of morals on the part of Infidels, in this country, generally, that to say—"A man is an Infidel"—is understood, of course, as a declaration, that he is a plainly immoral man. On the contrary, to say—"A man is a true or real Christian"—is universally understood as a declaration, that he is a man distinguishedly virtuous. This phraseology has its origin in the

experience, and common sense, of mankind, and may be fairly assumed as complete evidence of the sentiment alleged.

That this Philosophy is unable to support itself, is evident from its progress. Philosophers, as has been remarked, have, from the beginning, changed continually the Infidel system. The doctrines, which Herbert and Tindal declared to be so evident, that God could not make them more evident, were wholly given up, as untenable, by Hume; and the Scepticism of Hume sustained no higher character in the mind of D'Alembert. Mere Infidelity gave up Natural Religion, and Atheism mere Infidelity. Atheism is the system, at present in vogue. What will succeed it, cannot be foreseen. One consolation, however, attends the subject; and that is—No other system can be so groundless, so despicable, or so completely ruinous to the morals and happiness of mankind.

The conduct of Philosophers in opposing their antagonists, and in supporting themselves, has been alike, and has alike evinced the weakness of their cause, in both respects. Each effort has had, as was to be expected, its day of applause and adoption, and has then given up its place, and importance, to a succeeding effort. Succeeding Philosophers, instead of relying on the arguments, or systems, of their predecessors, have laboriously devised new ones. Each relies apparently, and perhaps firmly, upon his own; but is of course forsaken by those, who come after him. The weight, which they have had, for a time, has been therefore casual; the weight of novelty, fashion, and currency, and the result of ingenuity and celebrity; not the weight of truth and evidence, nor the result of serious and permanent conviction. Were succeeding Philosophers satisfied with either the opposition, or the doctrines of their predecessors, they would of course have insisted anew on their arguments, and systems; explained more fully the parts and nature of each, and obviated the answers of their adversaries. Convinced of the truth and rectitude of what had been done before, they would have felt themselves bound to exert themselves in its defence. Natural Religion, or Theism, would now have been the great reliance of Infidels, and all their arguments would have been directed to its support. The Athe-

ists feel, at the present time, a triumphant confidence in the permanency of their system; the Theists, a few years since, felt equally satisfied of the continuance of theirs. This confidence in both was equally well founded. There is now all the probability, that those, who are to come, will desert Atheism, which there was a little while since, that the present system would desert Theism. Yet now the French Committee of Public Instruction declare, that a people of Theists will necessarily become Revelationists.

The insolence and ridicule, exhibited universally by Infidel Writers, is, at least to my view, a strong indication of the consciousness of the weakness of their cause, and of the insufficiency of their arguments. Men who feel their cause to be good, and their means of support to be strong, usually discover moderation and decency in the management. A strong man is usually mild, and civil; a weak one, to conceal his weakness, is often petulant and blustering. Were Infidels satisfied of the goodness of their cause, and the soundness of their arguments, they would not, it is presumed, so often resort to ridicule instead of reasoning, nor intrench themselves behind insolence and contempt, instead of facts and evidence. In any other case, this conduct would be deemed a proof of weakness in the cause, and of doubt in its advocates.

As the great arguments in support of Christianity remain in full force, it is rationally concluded, that they will ever so remain. Infidel Philosophers, in great numbers, of the utmost enmity to the Christian cause, of eminent industry, and of as considerable ingenuity as will probably be found hereafter, have already exhausted their strength in their attacks on Revelation. As they have hitherto failed of success, it is fairly presumed, that they will finally fail. Almost all the topics of opposition have been thoroughly explored, and the most effectual use made of them, which is practicable. Hence they will probably gain little additional strength on the side of argument. More influence, and more converts, they may not improbably gain. The present time is supposed to be marked in Prophecy, as an eminent season of delusion; and the delusion has not, hitherto, reached the bounds predicted. But to gain these is a very different thing from acquiring additional strength from reason and evidence.

To a serious and candid man the fact, above recited, must appear of high importance. He cannot but see, that Christianity has been attacked by a numerous host of enemies, ardent, industrious, and ingenious, through a long period, with unremitting efforts, and on every side. No measure has been left untried, no means of success unexplored, and no kind of hostility scrupled. Its strength has therefore been proved. Such a man will feel of course, that Christianity must resist successfully every future assault, and that it will be early enough to doubt of its firmness, when its pillars shall begin to be shaken, and its foundation to be undermined.

4. Philosophy will not, and Christianity will, increase your comfort, and lessen your distresses here, and save you from misery, and confer on you happiness, hereafter.

From the observations already made, you must have clearly perceived, that Philosophy furnishes you with no directory to regulate your moral conduct, no scheme of the duties of life. As pure Theism, or Natural Religion, it teaches not a duty, which is not unspeakably better taught by the Scriptures; while it is wholly ignorant of very many, which, when taught, are seen to be of the highest importance. It knows not, it cannot know, what service, what worship, is acceptable to God, or whether any can be accepted. It sees all men to be sinners, and yet knows not, that sinners can be forgiven, or reinstated in the character and condition of faithful subjects of the government of God. If this be possible, it knows not how, when, or where. Of sanctions to enforce, and motives to encourage obedience, it is destitute and beggared. To the peace, which springs from the conscious performance of duty it is a stranger; and in the joy, which flows from hopeful acceptance with God, it shares not, even as a guest. Under these disadvantages, you will not wonder, that it lingers and languishes in its course, and halts at a distance from the gate of virtue.

As mere Infidelity, it teaches nothing but to contest all principles, and to adopt none. As Scepticism, it is an ocean of doubt and agitation, in which there are no soundings, and to which there is no shore. As Animalism and Atheism it completes the ravage and ruin of man, which, in its preceding forms, it had so success-

fully begun. It now holds out the rank Circean draught, and sends the deluded wretches, who are allured to taste, to bristle and wallow with the swine, to play tricks with the monkey, to rage and rend with the tiger, and to putrify into nothing with the herd of kindred brutes.

Christianity, with an influence infinitely more benevolent, enhances the value of your present life beyond the search of calculation. It informs you, that you are the intelligent and moral creatures of the All-perfect *JEHOVAH*, who made, who preserves, who rules the Universe, who is present in all places, who beholds all things; who is eternal and immutable; infinitely benevolent, infinitely beneficent; the faithful friend of the virtuous; the unchanging enemy of sin; the rewarder, and the reward, of all returning sinners, who diligently seek him. In this character it presents to you a direct, clear, and perfect system of rules for all your moral conduct; rules of thinking, speaking, and acting; rules, reaching every possible case, and removing every rational doubt. Here is no uncertainty, no wavering, no tossing on the billows of anxiety, no plunging into the gulph of despair. Your path is a straight and beaten way, and, were you way-faring men, and fools, you need not err therein.

As you pass through the various stages of your journey, you are furnished with aids and motives infinite, to check your delays, to recall your wanderings, to cheer fatigue, to refresh your languor, to lessen your difficulties, to renew your strength, and to prolong your perseverance to the end. Should you at any time, through ignorance, inattention, or allurements, dangerously diverge from your course, a sweet and charming Voice behind you cries, "This is the way, walk ye therein."

In the sublime character of moral subjects of the All-ruling God, you are called to a life of obedience and virtue. Sinners, indeed, you are: and as such, in the eye of Natural Religion are condemned and lost; but in the Scriptures you are taught, that most delightful of all truths, that you may rise again to the character, and the blessing, of those, who have never fallen; and may thus rise upon conditions, which, if guided by wisdom, you would yourselves have chosen, as the most easy, the most reasonable, the most desirable, of all conditions; upon conditions, which are distinguished

blessings in themselves, and the beginning of blessings, which will multiply forever. A scheme of duty is proposed to you, and required of you; but every part of it is at once useful and delightful. From the performance of it will daily and infallibly spring the peace of an approving mind, the dignity of conscious virtue, the retreat of gloomy apprehension, and the dawn of radiant hope, the day-star of endless life.

Should you hereafter have families, your communication of the principles, and your practice of the duties, of Christianity will beyond all things else, insure to you domestic peace and prosperity. Your households will assume the same dignified character, and share in the same requisite enjoyments. All will love, esteem, and befriend, and be loved, esteemed, and befriended. Your interests, designs, and pursuits, will be noble and virtuous, the parents of concord and happiness. To the ties of natural affection will be superadded the benevolence, and the brotherly love, of the Gospel; and these will animate, refine, and exalt every affection, and every purpose, will bring daily consolation and enduring joy, and will prove the delightful forerunners of future beatitude.

The Friends, who visit you, will esteem and love you, for they will find in your character something to be esteemed and loved. They will also be friends, of the best character, will most cordially return your kind offices, and will most richly merit and lastingly retain your confidence. They will be friends here, and friends forever.

To the neighbourhoods around you, you will be, and will be esteemed, benefactors and blessings. The poor, the sick, the outcast, the friendless, and the disconsolate, will especially, acknowledge you as their patrons. Enemies you will find; for the performance of your duty will oppose lust, and restrain corruption; but they will be such enemies, as, without a total change of their character, a good man would not wish to be his friends. Every vicious man will feel his inferiority to you with pain, and experience deep mortification in knowing, that he cannot look you in the face with a composed countenance, and steady eye. Compare your friends with your enemies, and you will find nothing to be regretted.

Nor will you be less useful to your Country. Rational Freedom cannot be preserved without the aid of Christianity. Not a proof is found in the experience, not a probability is presented to the judgment, of man, that Infidelity can support a free, and at the same time an efficient government. In this country, the freest, and the happiest, which the world has hitherto seen, the whole system of policy originated, has continued, and stands, on the single basis of Christianity. Good subjects have been formed here by forming good men; and none but good subjects can long be governed by persuasion. The learning, peace, mild intercourse, and universally happy state of society, enjoyed here, all own the same origin. Would you preserve these blessings during your own lives, would you hand them down to posterity, increasing multitudes of those who are not Christians, and all those who are, with one voice tell you, "Embrace Christianity."

It is by no means my intention, or my wish, to flatter you with hopes of unmingled happiness on this side of the grave. This world has ever been and still is, a vale of tears. Want, pain, sorrow, disease, and death, are constant tenants of this unhappy soil, and frequent inmates of every human dwelling. To aid the sufferer, to sustain, and to vanquish, these unfriendly visitors, Christianity furnishes the peace, the patience, and the fortitude of virtue, the consciousness of forgiven sin, and Infinite complacency, and the supporting hope of endless and evergrowing sanctity, happiness, and glory. In every throbbing bosom she sings, "This light affliction, which is but for a moment, is not worthy to be compared with the glory, that shall be revealed hereafter." The song is the song of Angels; the voice is the voice of God.

All these alleviations are, at a stroke, swept away by the besom of Philosophy. Like a rude, unfeeling nurse, she approaches the bed of pain and sickness, and tells the groaning sufferer, that he is indeed miserable; and that he may quietly resolve to bear his calamities, for they are irremediable and hopeless. To the despairing victims of want, infamy, and oppression, she extends her hand, empty of comfort, and passes by on the other side. The Parent, overwhelmed by woe for the loss of his only son, she coolly informs, that his tears and his sighs are useless, for his favourite has ceased from the light of the living, and vanished forever. To

the failing eye of the poor, desponding, and expiring wretch she holds out her dark lantern, and as the only consolation which she can give, shows him the sullen region of annihilation, destined to receive and wrap him in eternal and oblivious night.

You, with the rest of men, must suffer woe. Poverty may betide, shame may arrest, pain may agonize, sorrow may sink, disease may waste, and death will befall you. In all these evils you will seek for consolation, support, and hope. From Philosophy you will find none. On that solemn day, which is fast approaching, when you will be extended upon the bed of death, when the physician has bidden you adieu, and your friends are watching for the parting gasp, your souls will cling to existence, will pant for relief, and will search the Universe for a glimmering of hope. Should Philosophy have been your bosom companion, and the arm on which you have finally rested, you will then know what it is to have renounced Religion, to look back on a life of sin with agony, and forward to a world of suspense with horror. Christianity, sighing her last farewell, and dropping her parting tear, will retire in silence and sorrow, and will mourn with deep compassion, that, forlorn and dreadful as was your lot, you would not suffer her to allay your misery, and with the lamp of hope light you through your melancholy path into the world of future being.

Religion, on the contrary, feels, and proves, a regard for the sorrows of man, infinitely more tender, soothing, and supporting. Like the fabled power of enchantment, she changes the thorny couch into a bed of down, closes with a touch the wounds of the soul, and converts a wilderness of woe into the borders of Paradise. Whenever you are forced to drink the cup of bitterness, Mercy, at her call, will stand by your side, and mingle sweetness with the draught; while with a voice of mildness and consolation she will whisper to you, that the potion, though unpleasant, is necessary and balsamic; that you have diseases to be removed, and morbid principles to be exterminated; and that the unpalatable administration will assuredly establish in you health immortal. The same sweetener of life will accompany you to the end, and, seating herself by your dying bed, will draw aside the curtains of eternity, will bid you lift your closing eyes on the end of sorrow, pain, and care, and in the opened gates of peace and glory will

point to you, in full view, the friends of Christ, waiting to hail your arrival.

That Christianity gives all these blessings, and gives them certainly ; that it produces no loss, and great gain, in the present world ; that it makes nothing worse, and every thing better ; is clearly evident from the nature of the Christian system. The doctrines, precepts, and promises, contain and secure all this, and much more. At the same time, every Christian is a witness to this truth. Every Christian has, by experience, known the pleasures of sin, and, by the same experience also, has known the pleasures of religion. To whatever degree, therefore, his experience has extended, he is a complete judge of both. Many, very many Christians have also fully enjoyed the highest pleasures of science and intellect, and are of course unexceptionable judges of these pleasures. But no Christian was ever found, who for a moment admitted, that any pleasures were to be compared with those of religion ; not one, who would not say, that for the loss of religion worlds would be a poor compensation. In every other case this evidence would be acknowledged as complete. Nor is it balanced, or lessened, by any contrary evidence. Infidels have never tasted the pleasures of religion, and, in the decision of this question, are, therefore, without a voice.

With these blessings in view, you will, I trust without a sigh, leave to the Infidel his peculiar gratifications. In every innocent enjoyment you can partake at least as largely as he. You will not, therefore, repine, that you cannot shine, at a horserace, bet at a cockpit, win at a gaming-table, riot at the board of intemperance, drink deep at the midnight debauch, or steal to infamous enjoyments at the brothel.

But the most important consideration is yet to be suggested ; a consideration infinitely awful and glorious. There may be an Hereafter. There may be a future Judgment, a future Retribution. The course of Sin, begun here, may continue forever. The seed of virtue, sown in the present world, and raised to a young and feeble stem, may be destined to growth immortal. The misery, produced here by Sin, may be unceasingly generated by the same wretched cause, through ages which cannot end. The peace

and joy, which virtue creates, during this transient life, the same illustrious power may expand, and prolong, through an ever-enlarging progress.

What the natural eye thus sees with dim and probable vision, Christianity, possessed of superior optics, discerns, and promises, with clear, prophetic certainty. Endless death and endless life are written in full and glowing characters in the book, sealed to unenlightened and unassisted man with seven seals. That book a hand infinite and supreme unrolls to every humble, penitent, believing mind, and discloses to the enraptured view the page of eternity, on which things divine and immortal are pencilled with sun-beams. A residence finished with infinite workmanship, employments pure and ravishing, a character completely dignified and lovely, companions the first and best in the universe, a system of Providence, composed wholly of good, refining, ascending, and brightening forever, and a God seen, known, and enjoyed, in all his combined perfection, are there drawn in colours of light and life.

In the same volume is disclosed by the same hand the immense woe, destined to reward the perpetration of iniquity, voluntary blindness, and immoveable impenitence. Allured and charmed by supreme endearments, on the one hand, the mind is, on the other, equally awakened and alarmed. Good and evil passing conception, passing limits, are offered to the choice; and by that choice alone the good may be secured, and evil avoided, forever.

With respect to these amazing things, Philosophy knows nothing, threatens nothing, promises nothing. To Philosophy the invisible world is an unknown vast, over which, like the raven sent out of the ark, she wanders with a wearied wing, seeking rest, and finding none. To her exploring eye, the universe is one immense, unfathomable ocean. Above, around, beneath, all is doubt, anxiety, and despair. Her accounts are, like her views, uncertain and conjectural only, the foundations of no assent, no satisfaction. If you adhere to them, you cannot lose, and you may infinitely gain. An infinite difference of possible good and evil therefore, demands your adoption of Christianity. I need no

place the subject on higher ground. To every thinking man there is, here, a motive infinite to embrace Christianity, and reject Infidel Philosophy.

If there is a God. (and that there is, is more certain, and evident, than that there is any being beside one's self,) he is doubtless perfect in holiness, as well as in power and knowledge. With holy or virtuous creatures he must of course be pleased; because holiness is obedience to his will, and because it is a resemblance to his character. As he must be pleased with his own character, so he must be pleased with his creatures, whenever they possess a character similar to his own. That he should not be pleased to have his will obeyed is impossible. The very supposition, that the Ruler has a will, involves in it necessarily, that he must be pleased to be obeyed. All the doctrines of Revelation, all the precepts, are summed up in this memorable sentence, "Be ye holy, as I the Lord your God am holy." To accomplish holiness, or virtue, in man is the single end of the Christian system. Christianity therefore teaches, enjoins, and with infinite motives pursues, what reason dictates as the highest wisdom of man. But, in all this, Infidel Philosophy has no part, nor lot, nor memorial.

Thus, in every view, the state and the prospects of the Christian are full of comfort, peace, and hope, of medicines for grief, and seasonings for joy. The present state of the Infidel is destitute of both, and prospects he has none. Here, the religion of the Christian brings with it, in hand, worth, usefulness, and dignity; and hereafter, in bright reversion, and through an interminable progress, life, wisdom, virtue, happiness, and glory. Philosophy, on the contrary, adds to him, here, no enjoyment, and robs him of the chief support of suffering; and, beyond the grave, plunders him of heaven, and consigns him to annihilation and despair.*

* Since these discourses were sent to the press, [in 1798.] I have seen a Work lately published in Great Britain, and republished in America, written by J. Robison, Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, and Secretary of the Royal Society in that city, and entitled, A Conspiracy against all the Governments and Religions in Europe. In this work the reader may see the dangers of Infidel Philosophy set in the strongest light possible. He may see a

plan formed, and to an alarming degree executed, for exterminating Christianity, Natural Religion, the belief of a God, of the immortality of the Soul, and Moral obligation; for rooting out of the world civil and domestic government, the right of property, marriage, natural affection, chastity, and decency; and in a word for destroying whatever is virtuous, refined or desirable, and introducing again universal savageness and brutism. All this is to be done under the pretence of enlarged Philanthropy, and of giving mankind liberty and equality. By this mask is carefully concealed the true end, which is no less than to reduce the whole human race under a complete subjugation to these Philosophers; a subjugation of mind as well as of body.

SERMON XXI.

LIFE A RACE.

PREACHED TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE BACCALAUREATE
IN 1799, 1806 AND 1812.



1 CORINTHIANS ix. 24.

Know ye not, that they, which run in a race, run all; but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

THE Chapter, of which these words are a part, is chiefly occupied in answering certain objections, made against *St. Paul* by some individuals of the Corinthian Church. These persons, having formed themselves into a party against their brethren, undertook to deny the Apostleship of *St. Paul*; and, among other things, objected against him, that he did not receive a support from the Christians of that city, while labouring there as a Minister of the Gospel. This, they insinuated, he durst not do, because he was not truly an Apostle, and therefore was conscious, that he had no right to receive a maintenance from those to whom he ministered. However strange it may seem to us, this objection was not without weight among the Corinthians; and contributed not a little to disturb the peace of their Church, and to unsettle among them the authority of the Apostle. He, therefore, replies to it in form; and, after asserting his absolute right to all the privileges claimed by any of the Apostles, declares to them the true reasons of his conduct. These, summarily, amounted to this general one; that he expected in this manner to increase the

number of converts to Christianity, and to diffuse more widely the glory and blessings of Christ. To illustrate this conduct of his, and to prove the reasonableness and credibility of his declarations, he reminds them, that their own countrymen underwent great self-denial to prepare themselves for the *Isthmian Games*, celebrated in the territory of Corinth; and strove in them with excessive exertions, merely to gain a crown of pine twigs. It could not, therefore, be thought strange, that he, for a crown of glory in the Heavens, should undergo even greater self-denial.

The occasion, furnished by this allusion, he seized, as he did every other, to inculcate the duties of Christianity. His own example in this mighty concern he presses upon them; and urges them to strive with the like vigorous efforts for the attainment of the same immortal prize. The eagerness, with which the combatants ran in their races for a fading garland, and for honour equally, perishing, he urges as a powerful stimulus to similar eagerness in the Christian race, of which the reward was a crown of eternal glory. To encourage them still further, he reminds them that of all those, who ran in the Stadium, one only gained the prize; while, in the Christian race, all, who ran with due earnestness, would win, and none, but the slothful and careless, would lose, the destined crown:

The Youths, who are now about to leave, finally, this place of education, are all adventurers on the Stadium of life; and are just entering upon the race. Endeared to me by many considerations; particularly, by my intimate and long continued connection with them, and by their amiable and respectful behaviour, and honourable improvement in learning and science; they claim my best advice and wishes, and ardent prayers for their welfare. On this occasion, therefore, it cannot fail to be useful for me to give, and for them affectionately to receive, the monition, *that of such adventurers some at least lose the prize for which they run; nor can it fail to be a timely exhortation to them, so to run that they may obtain.*

To render the monition, here proposed, as impressive as may be, and to produce practical conviction of the extent and importance of the truth which it contains, perhaps nothing will be more advantageous, than a summary exhibition of the different courses,

pursued by different adventurers ; together with the attendants, and consequences, of their conduct.

Youths, when they leave this seminary, become divided and distributed, throughout life, by their different professions. If the professions adopted are honest and useful, the distinction between them is of no serious importance. A man may fill up his days with usefulness in any such profession ; and of course may act well the part assigned him by his Maker. Among those, who enter into such professions, very different conduct is however found ; accompanied by very different characters and circumstances, and terminated by very different ends.

One, whose life began with the same prospects, and the same hopes, which were spread before his companions, *commences his career with the predominating love of ease, and under the powerful influence of sloth.* Labour of the *hands* is naturally irksome to man ; and labour of the *mind*, to which students are usually destined through life, is still more irksome. To most men habit only can make this kind of labour agreeable. Habit can overcome every antipathy ; can change reluctance into voluntary effort, transmute pain into pleasure, and convert the man almost into a new being. Especially can these changes be accomplished by habits begun in youth ; during the existence of that flexibility of character, which prepares the mind for an easy entrance upon any course to which it is directed. When sober and constant application is, at this period, rendered habitual ; all the original reluctance to it will vanish ; and the pain, with which it was attended, will be changed into pleasure.

This, however, is far from being uniformly the fact. Of those, who leave this seat of education yearly, some at least carry away their original aversion to industry, increased and riveted, by four years' indulgence in sloth. The evil, in this case, is commonly beyond a cure. Whatever employment they choose, they can endure neither the toil of preparing themselves for it, nor the irksomeness of discharging the duties which it demands. Ambition, the love of Wealth, and the sense of duty, are all overpowered by the dislike of application. The *hope* of eminence is, in the minds of such persons, relinquished with no great reluctance at the beginning ; and the *wish* for it extinguished at a period, not

very far advanced. The company of those who are already eminent, and of those who promise to be eminent, is yielded, with now and then a pang perhaps, for the society of men of an inferior character; and this society, soon after, for companions still more humble. As the greater part of mankind have some degree of energy, and make exertions of some importance; the slothful man, unable to continue where any degree of vigour is found, slides down, from a total want of both, through one gradation of life after another; because he has not sufficient resolution, and cannot make sufficient efforts, to keep himself in any gradation. All industrious men despise sloth; and no man can bear to continue where he is despised. A sense of the contempt, which the slothful man meets on account of his predominating character, increases the rapidity of his descent: for it renders him willing to leave a station in which, and companions from whom, he is perpetually exposed to this cutting humiliation. Within a short time, therefore, he arrives at the bottom.

This, however, is far from being all, or even the worst, of his degradation. His sloth is gross vice in itself; and eminently the object of the disesteem of the worthy, and the scorn of the worthless. The contempt, which he experiences, he feels himself to deserve. To every testimony against his useless life conscience joins her solemn Amen; and his heart with shame and silence confesses, that the finger of derision is deservedly pointed at him. A mere drone in the hive, he lives only on the labours of others. Irresistible evidence forces him to know himself, and to discern that others know him, to be a mere burden, hanging heavily on the shoulders of industry; a Nuisance to his neighbourhood, which every man wishes to see removed. Poor he is of course; and that when all men see, that he might have possessed at least a competence. Ignorant he is, when all men see, that he might and ought to have been learned. Despicable he is, when even himself feels, and often feels with a sting, that he might have sustained an honourable character: but he *wrapped his talents in a napkin, and buried them in the earth.*

In the mean time, his sloth is a fruitful source of other vices. To gain the subsistence, and the comforts, which honestly flow from industry only, he is driven to a succession of shifts, and dan-

gerous expedients. Fraud and falsehood ever stand at the elbow, court the attention, and claim the guidance, of every lazy man. These sedulous companions, whose services are always spontaneously offered, multiply magnificent promises, but regularly forget to fulfil them. Still, from the apostasy of man to the present day, they have been trusted, of course, by every votary of sloth; and have uniformly deceived those, by whom they have been trusted. Gambling, Sharping, Swindling, fraudulent bankruptcy, forgery, and counterfeiting the currency of their country, are the deplorable expedients, to which lazy men usually betake themselves in their progress, and some or other of which are the ultimate resort of every lazy man. All these increase the guilt, and thicken the infamy, which form his character; and every one helps him forward towards detestation, voluntary exile, the pillory, the jail, and the gibbet.

In this world he looks around him, in vain, for something to relieve, console, and sustain, his sinking mind. Every eye informs him, that he has lost the esteem, forfeited the kindness, and earned the hatred, of his fellow-men. To the future world he dares not look: for he has violated every moral rule, and perverted the great end of his being; usefulness in the creation of God. Thus his way through life is *a hedge of thorns*: and, although it originally *seemed right*, or at least agreeable, to him, yet the end thereof is a bitter death.

A Second, starting from the same goal, *devotes himself to the enjoyment of those pleasures, which flow from property freely expended*. Persons of this description are usually heirs of large estates, and are trained up, either through negligence or design, in the belief, that their parents have amassed enough to furnish them with the means of living in mere gratification. Others, in their opinion, were born to labour, and acquire; while themselves came into the world only to enjoy. Happy in their destiny beyond the common lot, they feel themselves to have eluded the curse denounced against man; and to be peculiar favourites of heaven, in whose behalf the common doom is reversed. To others, indeed, the earth still labours under the original sentence, and *brings forth* nothing but *thorns and thistles*. But to them its spontaneous productions are only flowers, and fruits, and spices; the silks

of *China*, the gold of *Mexico*, and the diamonds of *Golconda*. Almost all others are still compelled to *eat their bread with the sweat of their brow*; but a milder planet was lord of the ascendant at their birth, and destined them to dress, to dance, to sport, to repose on down, to feed only on dainties, to dwell in villas, to walk in gardens of pleasure, and to roll through life on wheels of splendour. To others the World is still *a vale of tears*; but to them has resumed the beauty, the fragrance, and the raptures, of *Eden*. Suns for them are to rise and set without a cloud, and Spring to dance at the head of none but serene and sportive seasons. Whatever storms may beat, whatever ills may betide others through the ocean of life; *their bark* is to be wafted by zephyrs only; and to glide over a serene and glassy surface to the Fortunate Islands.

A life of pleasure is always more costly than its votary expects. Should he arrange his expenses, carefully, within his property; he, nevertheless, will regularly find them greater than his calculations. When he begins his course, he is invariably ignorant, that his wishes will enlarge in consequence of every gratification; and that such wishes, when they arise, will appear as rational, and as proper to be gratified, as those which preceded. Originally, nothing would have persuaded him, that what he then thought extravagance and folly would, at a future season, engross his serious pursuit. Yet, when his wishes have expanded by a course of indulgence, he will feel the gratification of these to be equally reasonable, and necessary, with those of any former period. Hence, his expenses, increasing continually with his desires, will advance with a progress of which he did not form a conception. His house, his gardens, his equipage, his table, his amusements, will all demand sums greater than his estimate; and his property will, of course, vanish more rapidly than he ever mistrusted.

Of such profusion the end is easily foreseen by all but himself. By himself it would be foreseen, did he not, as millions have done before him, overrate his own skill in conducting the business of life; and find in his peculiar prudence and forecast ample security against the ruin, which has so generally befallen others. Thus, although he is marked out by every other eye, as the certain victim of destruction, he is advancing in his own opinion merely to

superior and exquisite enjoyment; and, whenever he is alarmed by occasional warnings of his danger, he finds a safe as well as comfortable refuge in the very pleasing conviction, that he is wiser than any who have gone before him.

The career of profusion, and, as it is termed, of *enjoyment*, is rarely long; God has not destined so useless a course of life to last. Health usually fails soon; and property much sooner. To decline, in any serious respect, is painful to the very nature of intelligent beings; and peculiarly so to those, who have brought the evil upon themselves. No small suffering is experienced from the mere decay of our circumstances and enjoyments, when witnessed, as it ever must be, by those around us. A gloomy humiliation here enters the heart; and no preconception can prevent so unwelcome an intruder. The pity of the humane, the contempt of the severe, and the malignant satisfaction of the envious, all join to increase the distress; nor can any means of defence against such enemies be found. Scorn is an assailant, which forces every pass, and surmounts every bulwark. But the prodigal is naked both of arms and fortresses. In disappointment, poverty, and the loss of pleasure, now by habit become necessary to his comfort, and perhaps to his life; in the anxiety to provide, and the despair of providing, means of future indulgence; in the hopeless state of his ruined affairs, and the conscious certainty of having no means of retrieving them: he finds evils more numerous, and powerful, than he knows how to encounter. His family furnishes new and vast additions to his misery. A beggared wife, beggared by himself; children trained to pleasure and profusion, idleness and vice, taught to cherish eager expectations, that *to-morrow will be as this day, and more abundant*, and consequently prepared for nothing but guilt, despair, and ruin; halls emptied or soon to be emptied, of the gilded and buzzing trains, heretofore fluttering in the beams of his prosperity; lands mortgaged to those, whom he habitually despised, as dull, plodding wretches, destitute of sense and spirit; buildings, furniture, horses, and carriages, destined speedily to the hammer of the auctioneer: cloud his eye with gloom, sink his heart, benumb his resolution, and proclaim in his ear, "Thou art numbered, and finished."

In addition to all these things, he is daily and irresistibly forced

to remember, that his calamities are the fruit of his own folly and guilt. The supreme supports of suffering are derived from our own minds, and from our Creator. With God he has had no other correspondence, beside saying to him, *Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* In his own mind he finds nothing registered, on which he can fasten for consolation. No useful labours for himself, his family, or mankind, recur, to yield him conscious dignity. No innocence of life brightens the page of memory. No self-approbation illumines the dark and melancholy chambers of the soul. No recollected offices of kindness, justice and faithfulness, shed a lustre over the black records of idleness, sensuality, and profusion. The only account, which he can find in tracing the history of his life, is an account of wasted talents, squandered wealth, a ruined family, a forgotten soul, and a general course of madness and sin. Thus, a mere nuisance to the world, a spot in the creation of God he is wiped out by the hand of death, and goes to receive his reward.

A Third, differing greatly from those already described, and prompted either by a remembrance of the lowly station in which he has hitherto lived, or by the opposite influence of family distinction, *sets out in life with a professed determination to be great.* At a distance before him, but in clear and certain prospect, he sees suffrages, fame, office and power, glittering with inherent and fascinating splendour. In the histories which he reads, in the conversation which he hears, and in the observation with which he regards human life, he finds none worthy of being imitated or envied, beside those who are renowned for learning, eloquence, popularity, station and power; and nothing worthy of his wishes or his labours except the talents which they possessed, and the rewards which they gained.

The hope of applause makes his pulse beat and his blood thrill, with increased emotion; and the prospect of distinction animates every power, and quickens every effort. To study, to toil, to watch, and to weary himself, is all considered by him as the proper and cheap purchase of fame; and *many years seem to him but a few days, for the love*, by which he is drawn to this enchanting beauty. The success of every preceding candidate stimulates him to new and more ardent exertions; the approach of every

one behind him sounds an alarm in his ears; and the appearance of every rival makes his heart throb with mingled emotions of envy and apprehension. In the company of those, who are already great, he loves always to be found: the actions of the great only he loves to rehearse: and the opinions of the great only he loves to adopt. Ever on the chase, he considers all obstacles merely as difficulties gloriously to be overcome; sees ways to rise, from which more quiet minds would turn back discouraged; and thrives on the opposition, envy, and obloquy, which fill his more timid companions with pain and terror. The lowly, the meek, the ordinary, are, to him, out of sight and out of remembrance; and the paths of still and modest life present neither prospects nor entertainments, sufficient to invite his attention or his inquiry.

On a Spirit, like this, and on exertions such as these, success very frequently attends. The industry and efforts, which he employs, are worthy of nobler ends, and of minds directed by sublimer views; and often forcibly reprove the sloth of those, who labour for a wreath *which fadeth not away*. The knowledge, the eloquence, the influence, which he covets, may be acquired; suffrages may be gained; distinction may be achieved; and offices may be won; by the diligent and strenuous adventurer. With these fame, also, not unfrequently waits to present, with a willing hand, the laurel, which glistens with so enchanting a verdure.

I have chosen to represent him as crowned with success; because success frequently crowns those who so ardently strive; because it is invariably promised to themselves by men of this character; and because it will be useful to grant, here, to the votary of ambition all, which under the influence of common sobriety he can hope to attain. Were less granted, he would not feel as if his own case were even glanced at: for he is assured, that the amplest success will reward *him*. Were I not to grant all which ambition ever gains, the real good of ambition, and the real wisdom of being ambitious, would here neither be acknowledged nor seen.

But success in this course of life is rarely uniform, or lasting. From the pleasure found in change, from the satisfaction of humbling those who are already exalted, and, at times perhaps, from the more generous propensity to favour such as are young; man-

kind love to reward new adventurers. A new Star attracts a thousand eyes, and employs a thousand tongues; while those, to whose brilliance we have been accustomed, shine unseen and unregarded. A comet sets the world agape; while the planets, the moon, and even the sun, roll round their orbits, and see mankind quietly occupied by their usual business, or more quietly buried in sleep.

Of long continued splendour we become weary: the six months day at the pole is too fixed and unchanging a lustre for mortal eyes. The fall of one, long elevated, furnishes an agreeable and bustling tale for many mouths; and opens a cheering hope of future advancement to such as are beginning to rise. A malignant pleasure also, disreputable as the assertion may be thought to human nature, is but too frequently felt, when we see persons distinguished by eminence of character, and exalted stations, lowered to the common level. We feel naturally, although shamefully, gratified to see our superiors as low as ourselves; and all the painful emotions excited by their superiority finally removed. No plant thrives in a perpetual shade. No man feels his strength, or his consequence, beneath the loftier boughs of his neighbour. When, therefore, the votary of ambition has risen to enviable distinction; when the ardour of assisting him has cooled when his rise has ceased to be a novelty, and a source of pleasure when his efforts are no longer considered as the result of youthful and generous emulation, and begin to be viewed as the rank ambition of designing maturity; and when he is felt to stand in the way of those who follow: multitudes, who once helped to raise him will unite to hasten his decline: and every ear, which has grown dull in hearing his praises will be roused with new pleasure by the story of his fall.

All these things will also be enhanced by the conduct, and the disposition, which he has exhibited during his elevation. Ambition and pride are twin passions; and usually exist in the same breast; at least in different circumstances. The rising man is chiefly ambitious: when risen, he is proud. No passion is more blind, or selfish, than pride; none more unreasonable, or more impatiently endured. It is always insolent; it is usually unfeeling. Every man whom he has injured, or overlooked, or in whose

way to distinction he has stood ; every sufferer by his insolence, selfishness or neglect : will lend a cheerful hand to thrust him down ; busily rehearse the news of his disgrace ; and gather around him to enjoy the pleasure of triumphing over his ruin.

A Fourth, of still different character, rejects with loathing so uncertain, so dependent, so anxious a life, as that of ambition. "Honour," he shrewdly remarks, "is a mere bubble ; painted indeed with every brilliant colour, but fitted only to allure the gaze of children. Popularity is the mere breath of a giddy multitude, blowing in quick succession heat and cold from the same mouth. The wish for suffrage begins in weakness ; proceeds with art, fraud, and anxiety ; and ends in disappointment and disgrace. Office is a mere bed of thorns, on which a man can never be at ease, and on which he can turn himself only with increased pain. Public support is always lean, and insufficient for the expense of public living necessarily great ; and even that support is given with grudging, and enjoyed only with obloquy. To such dependence I cannot submit. In the meantime little or nothing is gained after all the toil and pains, undergone to acquire popular favour, beside ingratitude, murmuring, and slander. Nations are never grateful. To those who have served them the most, they are the most unkind ; and frequently reward their chief benefactors only with the grossest abuse. Nay, the very persons, who to-day salute their favourite with *hosannas*, are ready to *crucify* him, to-morrow."

"In wealth lies surer good : solid independence ; enduring consequence ; permanent support ; and the true means of looking diversity in the face without shrinking. Nay, here also lies the real secret of being useful. On property mankind live. From property flow alike the supplies of want, and the means of comfort. He, who adds to the common stock of property, adds, therefore, to the common stock of good ; and is, of course, the truly useful man. Such, at least, is my judgment ; and such the course, which I am determined to pursue."

It is easy to discern the faults of others ; and, in the courses of life which they pursue, to fasten upon the follies and the sufferings to which they are exposed. The censures, cast by the

avaricious man on the devotee to ambition, may be very severe and yet very just. His own error does not lie in attributing these evils to a life of ambition, but in not perceiving that evils of equal magnitude are, with the same justice, attributable to the ardent pursuit of property; in not perceiving, that *they, who will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.*

Satisfied, however, with the wisdom and rectitude of his own determination, he confidently embarks in the pursuit of Wealth. With a full assurance that it may be obtained and a full determination to obtain it, he begins a life of toil, care, economy, adventure, contrivance, activity, and perseverance. The morning Sun sees him already at his labours: the evening Sun leaves him still employed. No exertion seems too great, if it secures to him profit; no danger too threatening, if it lies in the way to gold; no bargain too hard, if closed with plentiful gain, and no employment too humble, if the service is well paid for. "*I made such a sum by that business*" is the boast of self-gratulation, which sweetens nay, which dignifies, every successful undertaking.

At first he is considered by mankind as an industrious, thrifty young man. Within a moderate period, he begins to wear the character of a person anxious to get the world. At length he takes up his final appellation of a downright miser.

But the censures of his neighbours he disregards; for he wisely determines, that they spring from envy at his prosperity. The cravings and murmurs of the poor he slights; for they are but mere cries of idleness and folly; of those, who, as they earn nothing for themselves, can never be entitled to sit in judgment on the earnings of others. The stings of his conscience are blunted by the pride and pleasure of being rich; or eluded by the perpetual immersion of his soul in business. The calls of God, of death, and of eternity, are lost in the bustle of great worldly concerns; or postponed, for an audience, to a future and more convenient day.

The native feelings of his heart, originally not delicate, grow continually more and more coarse, and dull; and the wants and sufferings of his fellow-creatures become gradually less impressiv-

and give him daily less and less trouble. At length he learns to hear with quiet the loudest complaints, and regards with indifference the keenest anguish, of the poor and wretched.

Never loved by mankind, he becomes at length detested. As he has regarded none, he is by none regarded. His success only awakens regret. His misfortunes are welcomed with pleasure, repeated with a smile, and acknowledged as proofs of a righteous Providence. His sickness is announced without a sigh, and his death without a tear.

Even his own family consider him as a mere incumbrance ; or, at the best, as a caterer for themselves ; as born to toil, and watch, and weary himself, that they may hereafter enjoy the fruits of his labours. Neither willing to taste of his earnings with *them*, nor to taste them alone, they can see no end, for which he should be continued in life, after he has ceased to earn. Around his death-bed they sit unmoved, in spite of the impulse of natural affection, which is unable to influence them either to love or respect him ; and his corpse they follow with cold decency to the grave.

A Fifth is charmed with gracefulness of life and deportment, with refinement and elegance ; and determines to be distinguished as a man of accomplished manners, and polished taste. Rich dress, splendid equipage, extensive buildings, and luxurious tables, are regarded by him as vulgar things ; as the mere fruits of money ; which a clown may earn, and expend. They prove, indeed, the owner's wealth ; but are no evidences of the superiority of his mind. Something of a higher cast, something more indicative of refinement and elegance of thought, is in his own view demanded of the man, who would be distinguished for liberal endowments, and elegant accomplishments. To wear the most graceful attire ; to become a Chesterfield in manners and conversation ; to shine in the most polished company ; to be styled *The Gentleman* by way of eminence ; and to be regarded as the standard of appeal in every case of propriety ; are the objects of his utmost ambition, and the sources of all his high enjoyment. *Things* are to him of little value : the *forms* of things, the *modes in which they are to appear, to act, and to operate*, engross his attention, wishes, and labours. To him the *matter, the substance*, is of no consequence ; a mere block of marble in the quarry ; useful only as it is capable

of being fashioned into grace and elegance by the hand of a master. *The manner* is, in his view, all that is valuable, or desirable. To do *good things* is in his estimation of no importance; for a boor may do them; but to do *handsome things* is the consummation of human attainments. Usefulness is of course a blank page in the volume of his life; and worth is left out of his catalogue of honourable qualities. To the eye of a considerate man he appears as a portrait, in which the face was merely sketched; and the mind, beaming through it, forgotten; while the art and labour of the painter were wholly lavished on the folds of the drapery. To such a man importance and respectability cannot be attached. Like such a picture, he may be admired for a while; but, after having been often seen, and become uninteresting by having become familiar, he ceases ultimately to attract attention, and is laid aside with other useless furniture.

A Sixth sits down soberly to the engrossing attainments of science. To be learned is the great object of his ambition; and to enjoy the sweets of knowledge the commanding dictate of his relish for pleasure. In his study he dwells: in his books he passes his life. *To think* appears to him the only proper end of human existence; while *to do* is not even entered on the register of his duties. The great distinction between men, and brutes, he perceives to be the intellect; and concludes, therefore, that difference of intellect is the only ground of distinction between men. With him an unlearned man passes only for a brute of a higher class; a connecting link between apes and real men. From the summit of sublime demonstrations, and the pinnacle of philosophical greatness, he looks down with scorn and pity on the grovelling beings, who creep over the plain below; and is ready to wonder, why such humble creatures were brought into existence; and, still more, why they were endued with the faculties of thought and speech. If it were possible for a proud man to be thankful, he would, at times, feel grateful emotions, that Providence has assigned to him a higher station; and not destined him to a character and to employments, totally unworthy of a rational being. In the mean time, he knows not that the whole end of thinking is action; and the whole use of science, in its most extended researches, the advancement of human happiness; that, when it terminates not in

this end, it is gold buried in the earth; useless, because it is not employed in the business of life. He has not discovered, that science is a means, and not an end. He does not discern, that a mind, richly fraught with knowledge, and existing only to think, is a watch, furnished indeed with wheels, and pinions, but without a spring to set it in motion, a balance to regulate it, or a hand to mark its circuits: a pretty object to the eye of curiosity, but of no use to its maker. He mistrusts not, that the clown, who faithfully follows the plough, or wields the hoe and the spade, is a better member of society than himself; nor dreams, that the two mites of such a man will be accepted as a gift to God, while his own abundance will be slighted and forgotten. The whole end of his life, so far as his fellow-creatures are concerned, is to excite admiration; and, so far as himself is concerned, to gratify the love of knowing. To his fellow-men his existence, among them, is as uninteresting, as to the inhabitants of another planet; for he feels no obligation to wish their happiness, and makes no effort to promote it. His talents, though formed for the noblest ends, and furnishing means of distinguished usefulness, are all closeted in his mind, or wasted over his books. After his death, his whole history may be written in this short epitaph:

Here lies a Learned Man.

A Seventh, and from all these a widely different character is found in the plain and modest walks of life. Convinced, that it is foolish and dangerous to mind high things; that competence is better than riches, moderation than splendour, and a private station than public offices; convinced, that extensive aims create excessive cares; that to be esteemed graceful is less desirable than to be accounted useful; that sloth is a mere standing pool, nauseous and deadly, and prodigality a troubled ocean, without a pilot, and without a shore: he determines to aim at being beloved, rather than admired; at being unopposed, rather than victorious over opposition; and at being unenvied, rather than superior to the attacks of envy. Satisfied with this decision, he enters originally upon a plain life, as his portion. While others aim at an empire, or a world, as their sphere of action, he finds his in a neighbourhood. To manage his family affairs, and occasionally those of a

small circle around him, is the only employment which he covets. To acquire so much property as may satisfy daily demands, and afford a stock on which he may repose in misfortune, and age; to gain the character of a good husband, father, neighbour, friend, and citizen; to be sufficiently polished, to find a ready admission into the company of those with whom he corresponds; and to possess that share of learning, which will render him an object of village respect, and entitle him to a place among his reputable neighbours: are all which he attempts, and almost all which he wishes. Freedom from trouble and embarrassment; safety from dangers, and losses; security from the hazard of disesteem and disgrace; and the possession of competence, quiet, decency, and good-will; are the prime objects of his pursuit. All these, in the common course of things, he easily acquires: for in the pursuit of these opposition is rarely found, and disappointment seldom occurs. A pang he may now and then experience, when he is told of the opulence and elevation of one, and another, of his former companions; but he feels himself abundantly compensated, when he hears of the bankruptcy of the one, and the downfall of the other. In these cases, he hugs his own safety; and congratulates himself on the wisdom of that course of life, which he has chosen: repeating often, and with much self-complacency, the superiority of that golden mean, which the wise man of antiquity so highly extolled; and which *Agur*, wiser than all of them, selected as the favourite object of his choice.

Thus quietly and easily he glides down the stream of life; despised, indeed, by some, and pitied by others; but by those around him generally beloved and respected. When he leaves the world, he leaves it, with the regret and the tears of those, to whose happiness he has contributed by his friendly offices.

The Eighth and last character, which I shall describe, pursues a course differing from them all: Not indeed from the five last in the business of life; for in this he may resemble any of them; but in the disposition, by which he is governed. Early sensible that he is an accountable creature, accountable to that God by whom he was created, and from whom he receives all his means of usefulness and comfort; he makes it his commanding object so to use them all. as at the end of life, to secure the divine approbation.

From the sluggard and the prodigal, he differs in the conviction, that diligence and prudence are duties and virtues; and from all those whom I have mentioned, in the conviction, that duty is his whole business; that virtue is his only glory, honour, or happiness; and that he was born to centre every view, engage every faculty, and employ every moment, in serving God, and not himself. Their endeavours all terminated in themselves. None of them felt the obligation of being useful to others, except when it contributed to his own personal convenience. With *him*, the first thing is to benefit others; to benefit himself, the second. *To do good* is in his view the only road *to gain*, or *enjoy*, it. The blessedness of the Infinite Mind he finds declared in the Scriptures to arise from the unlimited and endless communication of good to others. If he will obtain a happiness, resembling this, he is taught by the Scriptures, and confirmed in the doctrine by the fullest attestation of Reason, that he must possess a similar character, and pursue similar conduct; must seek for enjoyment in doing good, and not in gaining it from others.

From all these persons he differs, also, in the full conviction, that he was born for eternal being; and that the principal business of the present life is effectually to provide for the life beyond the grave; that, of course, all his efforts ought to be directed to this infinite object; and that nothing deserves his attention any farther than it consists with that aim, or contributes to its accomplishment. Thus he begins life with a new system, and a new end. The views of all, who have preceded him, were bounded by the grave: *his* are expanded through eternity. *Their* views centred in themselves; *his* are circumscribed only by the universe of being. One of those things, which, at the commencement of his career, naturally strike his mind with the greatest force, is a strong propensity in his heart, resisting powerfully every effort to pursue the course, which he has prescribed for himself. Avarice, Ambition, Sensuality, are all weeds naturally springing up in his own mind, as well as in the minds of others; and naturally flourishing unless carefully rooted up by the hand of culture. To check, and as far as may be to exterminate, these propensities, becomes therefore one of his earliest labours. Nor is it merely an early, but a daily, labour: for, like the good seed

in the Scriptures, they grow while he sleeps, and when he is not aware, and with a rapid as well as unperceived vegetation.

Temptations to the indulgence of all these passions exist every moment, and in every place. The natural longing for such objects, the sight of others continually engrossed by them, the regard paid by the multitude to those who acquire them; all unite to cherish, and strengthen, their importance in his own feelings. In most companies he hears no conversation, except concerning these objects. They are dwelt on, as the only solid good, by men of sober years; and painted with the charms of fascination in the ardent language of youth. To unite in the chase of them, is to unite with a world: to decline it, is to be left alone. Strong resolution is therefore required, to resist so powerful allurements. But his resolution is strong; and the additional strength, which he needs, he asks and receives from God.

With an original watchfulness, vigour, and firmness, he commences his opposition to these passions; and, every day he lives, renews his efforts with a determination to overcome. In so difficult a contest he is compelled to struggle hard; but *this advantage* attends all his labours; *that every instance of success enables him more easily to succeed again*. Every victory is pleasant, also, at the time of gaining it; and this pleasure soon renders the labour, necessary to gain the victory, unregarded, and in the end delightful. What, therefore, seemed at first a Herculean task, becomes at length no more than a common exertion.

Another important advantage he early secures to himself, which is unthought of by the preceding characters; viz. *the direction of all his efforts towards the controul of his thoughts*. A watchful attention to his moral concerns easily convinces him, that his chief danger lies in his mind. When, therefore, improper thoughts spring up there, he watches them at their commencement; when resistance will be neither doubtful, nor difficult. Attacked in this early, feeble state, they are easily overcome; whereas, after their full growth and frequent indulgence, they become irresistible.

In this conflict he daily calls to his aid *the Scriptures of Truth*. These furnish him motives, endless in multitude, and infinite in degree, to continue the warfare with unremitted endeavours to the end of his life. From the Scriptures he retires to *his closet*:

and, bowing his knees to the Father of all mercies, supplicates that divine aid, which is never long withheld; and finds in the very employment of praying, a part of that strength, for which he prays. From his closet he goes to the common duties of the day, prepared to discharge them faithfully, and fortified against a thousand temptations, by which his companions are assailed, and overpowered. In every situation, like David, he makes it his rule to set the Lord always before his face. This realized presence of his Maker is, on the one hand, a source of continual delight; and, on the other, a continual guard against the intruding temptation, and the approaching sin.

In every act of his duty he finds a peace which he covets to find again; and, to find which, he proceeds to perform his duty anew. The consciousness of being thus employed is a source of self-approbation, which is gained from no other employment; of delight in self-examination, which none of the preceding characters ever knew; of dignity inherent, independent, and noble; of hope, which maketh not ashamed, an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast.

In the mean time, the promises of the Gospel proffer to his acceptance a crown of endless rejoicing. All around him is God: all before him is heaven. In trials and conflicts, in adversity and anguish, in fear and sorrow, God is present, to sustain, refresh, and deliver him; and, after a little period, will be more gloriously present, to terminate all his cares, and to change his sorrows into joys unmingled and everlasting. A great part of all his business is to do good to his fellow-creatures: an employment, sweet, noble, and divine: a destiny, suited to an immortal being: a commission, worthy of the Infinite Mind: a well of water springing up to everlasting life. This business begins with the little, but eminently endeared, circle of his family; where it extends to the regulation and provision of all things, necessary for their support and comfort, their education and usefulness, their piety and salvation. Thence it reaches the wider circle of his neighbours, where it daily appears in that cheerful communication of kind, just, sincere, and faithful offices, which render life a blessing; and which, as a powerful example, charm others to go, and do likewise. From his neighbourhood it extends to his country; where it is

employed in honourable and public spirited efforts, and fervent prayers, for its welfare ; in promoting peace and good order ; in encouraging useful knowledge ; and in diffusing, as far as in him lies, undefiled religion. From his country it spreads also over the world ; in unceasing supplications for the deliverance of his fellow-men from *the bondage of corruption*, and their translation into *the glorious liberty of the sons of God*. From this world it makes excursions also at times into the distant regions of the Universe, on the wings of ardent good-will ; with delightful premonitions of that happy period, when his own mind shall be actively and eternally engaged in producing and communicating blessings throughout the immeasurable kingdom of virtue. Like the *slothful man*, he seeks for daily *ease* ; but it is the ease, which flows from the efforts of a diligent mind, and rewards the labours of an industrious life. Like the *prodigal* he *scatters abundantly* ; but he scatters blessings, and not curses, to himself and to others. Like the *ambitious man*, he *seeks for honour and distinction* ; but it is for the honour of immortality, and the distinction attached to the sons of God. Like the *avaricious man*, he continually *hoards up* ; but it is treasure in the heavens. Like *the man of Science*, he applies eagerly to *the attainment of knowledge* ; but it is the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of Heaven ; the knowledge of his duty, of his soul, and of his end. Like *the accomplished man*, he aims at *grace and elegance* ; but it is elegance of mind, and *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price*. Like *the man of moderation and decency*, he aims at *being safe and comfortable, peaceful and beloved* ; but it is the peace of forgiven sin ; the comfort of an approving conscience ; the safety which is found in Christ ; and the love of Christians, of Angels, and of God.

To him it is of little import, in what station of life he is found ; if it be the most useful station, for which he is qualified. If it be humble, he is satisfied ; because it is appointed by Him, who knows and chooses far better than he himself can choose. If more elevated ; he only becomes more careful to fill the station with usefulness and duty. Hence the cares and fears, the disappointments and mortifications, which harass his companions, are removed far from him. Troubles he must unquestionably find. Of

Defects he will undoubtedly be the subject. His disposition to perform his duty is imperfect; and produces its proper effects, therefore, in an imperfect degree. Still, this is his prevailing, increasing disposition; and gives birth to consequences, numerous, great, and desirable. To glorify his Maker, and to do good to his fellow-creatures, is his chief aim; the principal employment of his life. To that divine Saviour; by whose precepts he is instructed, by whose blood he is redeemed, by whose Spirit he is sanctified, and by whose intercession he is received to eternal glory, he consecrates all his life and labours; and esteems that all unspeakably too little to show the grateful sense which he feels of his obligations to him, and the supreme delight which he finds in doing his pleasure.

Thus he passes through life, not in a dull stagnation, but in an active, cheerful serenity of Soul; not in thoughtless and guilty prodigality, but in a rational and uninterrupted diffusion of blessings; not in a career of frantic ambition, but in a steady pursuit of eternal glory; not in sordid and swinish avarice, but in an industrious accumulation of celestial riches; not in acquiring *vain philosophy, and knowledge which only puffeth up*, but in enlarging his views of God, of his own mind, duty, and interest, and of the qualifications, and employments, *of just men made perfect*; not in a whimsical attention to form, and dress, and appearance, but in ardently gaining refined thought, elegance of affection, and beauty of mind; not in exhibiting mere decency of exterior, moderation of conduct, and regularity of life, to the eye of man, but in presenting to the eye of God that well regulated soul, that becoming life, that patient submission to his pleasure, which amiable and excellent in itself, will be remembered by him with everlasting love.

While this man lives, he is a blessing to all around him. *It is good for the world that he was born, and that he has sojourned here below.* Throughout eternity, governed by the same spirit, he will prove an accession to the universe; a blessing to the great kingdom of Jehovah.

Like the rest of mankind, he must however die. From this vale of tears he must be released; and Death is the method of release appointed by his Maker. As a release he regards it from

pain and fear, from sin and sorrow. Familiar to his eye by daily contemplation, and disarmed by the Mediation of Christ, Death, to him, has ceased to be *the king of terrors*. On the contrary, he is considered as a messenger from Heaven, rude indeed, and rough, and forbidding; but sent on a benevolent errand, and bringing merely the summons to call him home. With the peace, which Christ left as a rich legacy to all his faithful followers, he closes his eyes in sleep, and calmly resigns up his Spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father.

This man, in my view, has *so run* in the race of life, *as to obtain*
THE PRIZE.

SERMON XXII.

MINISTERS AND THEIR CONVERTS A MUTUAL REJOIC-
ING IN THE DAY OF CHRIST.

PREACHED TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE BACCALAUREATE
IN 1803 AND 1813.

1 THESSALONIANS ii. 19.

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming?

PAUL, with his fellow-labourers, *Silas and Timothy*, being directed by the Holy Ghost to go from *Asia* into *Macedonia*, passed over to *Philippi*, and gathered a church in that city. Hence they went to *Thessalonica*; and gathered another. Here, however, they were persecuted by the *Jews*. *Paul*, the chief object of their hatred, departed, therefore, to *Berea*. His persecutors followed him thither; and forced him to betake himself to *Athens*. From that city he proceeded to *Corinth*. Thus for a long time he was absent from *Thessalonica*; and, although exceedingly desirous to revisit the church, which he had founded there, was prevented by certain hindrances, which he has alluded to, but not described.

During his absence various objections, which he has specified in this Epistle, were by the *Jews*, and *Greeks*, of *Thessalonica* raised up against the Divine origin and authority of the Gospel. Among these were *his flight*, and *the length of his absence*. From these facts his adversaries argued, and endeavoured to persuade his converts, that he was an impostor; and not a messenger of God nor a friend to them. His flight they seem to have urged as a proof of his cowardice, and his absence, as satisfactory evidence, that he was regardless of the *Thessalonian* Christians.

The efforts of these malignant men appear to have alarmed the fears of the Apostle. To prevent their effect on the minds of his followers, he replied in this Epistle to the objections, made against him, and against the Gospel. Among the answers to those, made against him, the text contains one, remarkable for the extraordinary sentiment expressed in it, and for the affectionate manner in which it is communicated. "For what is my hope, or my joy, or my crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming?" Look at my life; and behold it made up of labours, and sufferings. What hope can I propose; what joy can I find, but in your conversion, and eternal life? This world is only hostile to me; and yields me neither rest nor safety. If, therefore, I am disposed to indulge any hope, or to expect any reward; it must lie beyond the grave. It must be furnished by you, my own converts; *turned* by my preaching *from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* In you, of course, my affections must centre with a sincerity and strength, which distance cannot change, nor time impair. Vain, therefore, and groundless, are the allegations of *your* enemies, and *mine*; when they insinuate, that I do not regard you with the tenderness of a parent, and the fidelity of an Apostle.

It is not to be supposed, that the *Thessalonian* converts were dearer to *St. Paul* than others, who had become Christians under his ministry. Unquestionably, he, who addressed the *Romans*, whom he had never seen, in terms so affectionate, could not but regard *his own* converts, universally, with the strongest attachment. Accordingly, he addresses the very sentiment, contained in the text, to the *Corinthians*: "As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus." To the *Philippians* he addresses it again. "Among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice, and service of your faith; I joy, and rejoice, with you all." Indeed, the text itself very obviously holds out to us the same truth. "For what is our hope, or joy? Are not καὶ υμεις, ye also?" ye, as well as others, "who elsewhere under my preaching become followers of the Redeemer?" This

was the construction of *Theophylact* ; and gives, I apprehend, the true meaning of the original.

It is to be observed, that *Sylvanus or Silas, and Timothy*, united with *Paul* in sending this Epistle to the *Thessalonians* ; and of course coincided with him in all the declarations, which it contains. Accordingly, the language of the text is, "What is our hope." These excellent men, therefore, who had been the Apostle's fellow-labourers in converting the *Thessalonians*, certainly expected to find the same glorious crown, and their own share in the same elevated joy, in the final day. That their expectations were well founded, the Spirit of inspiration, who dictated this Epistle, has left us the amplest proof.

It is also to be observed, that *Paul exhibits the Corinthians as rejoicing in him, and Timothy* who united with him in writing the second Epistle to that Church, *even as they did, in the members of that Church*. To the same joy in him he directs the *Philippians*, in the verse following the passage, already quoted. "For the same cause, also, do ye rejoice, and be glad with me."

The foundation of the Apostle's joy in his converts is particularly expressed in the whole of this passage, taken together. That ye may be blameless, and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine, as lights in the world : Holding forth the word of life ; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." The blameless, harmless, unrebukable character of these converts, the lustre of their example, and the glory, which it cast around the word of God ; constituted the source of that peculiar happiness, which he expected to find in the day of Christ. This exemplary piety, seen in their lives with such beauty and lustre, while it allured those, who beheld it, to follow them in the way to endless life, was, at the same time, a glorious proof of the faithfulness and efficacy of his own labours for their conversion.

In the text, thus considered, are contained the following doctrines.

I. *Those, who have been intimately connected in the present world, will at the day of judgment be known to each other.*

II. *Faithful Ministers of the Gospel, and those, who under their*

ministry have embraced the Gospel, will be mutual causes of joy at that day, and by consequence through eternity.

I. *Those, who have been intimately connected in the present world, will at the day of judgment be known to each other.*

Of the truth of this doctrine there can, I think, be little doubt. The Apostle, his fellow-labourers, and their converts, were to rejoice with each other at the day of Christ, with a peculiar joy. To these Ministers of the Gospel neither the saints of ancient times, nor those of succeeding generations, were to be their hope or their joy, or their crown. This character is in the text, and in the parallel passages which have been mentioned, expressly confined to their own converts. In the same manner these converts are exhibited as peculiarly rejoicing in *Paul* and *Timothy*, as *Ministers, by whom they believed*. But, if these preachers, and the converts, were thus to rejoice in each other; it follows of course, that they must be mutually known; and known in their mutual connection, as instruments, and heirs, of salvation. *St. Paul*, therefore, and *Timothy*, and *Silas*, will know the members of those churches for whom they wrote, and be known by them, in the day of Christ. Nor can there be any reasonable doubt, that other ministers and their converts will be known in the same manner; nor by parity of reasoning, that parents and children will know each other; husbands and their wives; instructors and their pupils; friends, also; companions; and neighbours.

In accordance with this scheme of thought it is said, that *many shall come from the east and from the west, from the north, and from the south, and sit down with Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob, and with all the prophets, in the kingdom of God. Lazarus was carried by Angels to Abraham's bosom*. These illustrious persons, therefore, must, it would seem according to any rational interpretation, be known to those, concerning whom these declarations are made. *Abraham, Lazarus, and the rich man*, were all known to each other. It is incredible, that this case should be singular; or the exhibition, made in it concerning the state of our future existence, erroneous.

In the same manner *Moses* and *Elias*, on the mount of transfiguration, were known, not only to each other, but to the three Apostles also: as *Peter* proves in his address to Christ. It cannot

rationally questioned, that this knowledge is universally a part of the divine system; or that all, who have been intimately connected here, will be known by each other hereafter.

II. *Ministers of the Gospel, and those, who under their ministry have embraced the Gospel, will be mutual causes of joy in that day; and by consequence, throughout eternity.*

Of this doctrine there can be as little doubt, as of the former. Both the text, and the parallel passages which have been quoted, furnish ample evidence of its truth. To such, as love the doctrines of the Scriptures, it must, however, be profitable to *examine the nature, and ground, of this joy.* I have already mentioned the declaration of *St. Paul* concerning this subject to the *Philippians*; in which he informs them, that their assumption of the Gospel as the rule of life, and of holiness as their moral character, the lustre of their obedience to the former, and the eminence of their proficiency in the latter, were the sources of that peculiar enjoyment which he and his fellow-labourers expected in the day of Christ. The same characteristics in him and his companions, and the peculiar faithfulness and success, with which they performed the duties of their stewardship, are, also, with sufficient clearness exhibited as the foundation of that joy, which their converts would find at the same solemn period.

It is impossible, that intelligent beings should find in each other more noble, or rational, sources of happiness than these. In their converts the ministers, in question, beheld a multitude of immortal souls, rescued from ignorance and idolatry, from endless sin and endless ruin; established in the belief and obedience of divine truth, and constituted heirs of everlasting glory, happiness, and virtue. On the one hand, how wonderful the escape! On the other, how amazing the acquisition! With what sympathy, with what transport, must such benevolent men, as *Paul*, *Moses*, and *Timothy*, behold this delightful scene! These converts were originally *without God, and without hope in the world*; worshipped images of gold and silver; of brass and stone; and prostrated themselves before the stock of a tree. They were aliens from the divine kingdom; outcasts from the virtuous universe; and heirs only of sin, and perdition. When the Apostle

and his companions first beheld them, how melancholy, how desolate, must have been the prospect! How deep the darkness in which they were involved! How entirely pathless the desert in which they groped their way! With what emotions must these messengers of salvation have regarded the miserable sufferers, in this state of gloom, solitude, and despair! With what yearnings of evangelical compassion did these ministers of Christ light up for them the lamp of hope; and guide them into the path to endless life! How joyfully did they behold them enter *the straight gate*, and go on in *the narrow way*! With what animated expectations did they mark their future progress; their victory over obstacles, temptations, enemies, and sins; their faithful adherence to the precepts of the Gospel; and the steady direction of their course towards heaven!

In *Paul* and his companions their converts beheld those, who in this world had been pre-eminently *wise*, and had *turned many to righteousness*; and who, therefore, were in the future world to *shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars, forever and ever*. In these illustrious ministers of Christ they beheld those, who, as instruments in the hands of God, had done to them greater good, than the universe beside was able to do: good, which could never be repaid; good, which no created mind can comprehend; good, which no limited duration can ever unfold. With the blessing of God, these men had accomplished their salvation; and secured to them *an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and eternal in the heavens*. The benefit, communicated, was the greatest of all benefits: and the disposition, by which it was produced, the best of all dispositions. At the final day, when future things will begin to be actual, realized, and enjoyed, they will see in them the best of all created friends, and the noblest of all created benefactors: friends, whose kindness will appear more lovely; whose beneficence, more valuable; and whose characters, more excellent; through every succeeding age of eternity. Thus connected, thus related; how can these ministers and their converts fail to rejoice in each other at this solemn day; or to increase their joy continually, as they advance through the successive periods of endless duration?

No labour is necessary to persuade my audience, that from a subject, so solemn, so interesting, so delightful, many inferences of high importance might be derived.

Particularly is *the integrity of Paul and his fellow-labourers* most clearly evident from the sentiments, expressed in this passage of Scripture. They are obviously sentiments, which no impostor, no dishonest man, would devise; or, if he had devised them, would have adopted. The hope, the joy, of such a man would have terminated, of course, in this world; and centred wholly in the means of enhancing his influence, and establishing his control over the *Thessalonians*. The Epistle, if written by such a man, would have abounded in artful refutations of the censures, thrown upon his character; and in insidious contrivances to gain the ends, which ambition, pride, and cunning, promise themselves from their successful efforts. Fraud and hypocrisy would have floated on the surface; and wealth, power, and pleasure, would have been seen at the bottom.

With the like clearness are *the excellence, and amiableness, of these men* unfolded in this passage of Scripture, thus examined. The objects, proposed, display a benevolence singularly generous and noble; and the exhibition of these objects presents this character in a light, eminently happy. Warm from the heart; uncontrived; unaffected; the sentiments expressed array the men with all the beauty and loveliness of Evangelical charity. The portrait is formed of enchanting lines, and charming colours: and the eye discerns, and acknowledges, the likeness without a momentary hesitation.

From this character of the writers is inferred, irresistibly, *the integrity of their writings*; and from this, in a manner equally obvious and necessary, *their divine origin*. But from these, and many other, reflections of a similar nature the time, barely sufficient for my present purpose, compels me to withdraw my attention. The peculiar design of this discourse requires, that I devote the remainder to its accomplishment.

You, my young friends, for whom this discourse is particularly designed, stand in a relation to me, in several respects the same with that in which the converts, so often mentioned, stood in relation to Paul and his companions. You have, also, been connect-

ed with me by a relation, highly endearing, which could not be predicated even of them. During an important period of your life, you have been my pupils ; and, in no insignificant sense, my children. Your parents with a confidence, which I hope has not been misplaced, have resigned their own immediate care of you into my hands. Your prime interests have been under my direction ; and have, I trust, been promoted with parental care. I know they have been regarded with parental tenderness.

Through the same period I have been your Minister. Christ, as well as your parents, has committed you to my direction. In this solemn office permit me to say, that I am unconscious of having taught you a single error, or of having willingly withheld from you a single truth. The knowledge, which may especially qualify you for usefulness and honour in the present life, I have endeavoured to communicate in the best manner, in my power. I know not, that *I have shunned to declare unto you any part of the whole counsel of God.* I know not, that *I have kept back any thing which was profitable to you : but I have shewed you, and taught you publicly and privately ; testifying to you all, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* *I have warned you,* I have prayed for you, *day and night with tears.* If I have ever been sincere in my endeavours ; if ever I have voluntarily laboured to do good ; i have laboured in this manner for you.

Your own conduct, in the mean time, (and I feel myself bound to declare it on this solemn occasion,) has been highly honourable to your character. You came to my immediate superintendance with the most cordial good will, and the best recommendations of your former instructors. Throughout the year, which is now finished, you have proved that this good will, and these recommendations, were amply deserved. In your behaviour to *me* you have been respectful and amiable on every occasion ; and have distinguished yourselves by diligence, good order, and universal propriety. It is not too much to say, that you have equalled in these respects, and in your literary attainments, any of those classes, which have gone before you.

Almost one-fourth of your number have made a public profession of the Religion of Christ ; and have this day surrounded the Sacramental Table. Several others, for a considerable time,

have been the subjects of very solemn impressions concerning their salvation; and will, it is rationally hoped, be found, ere long, encircling that hallowed board. The rest, with exceptions too small to merit attention at this time, furnish many hopes, from their irreproachable behaviour, that they may follow their companions in this happy course. Thus you have already *acknowledged me in part; that, as a Minister of Christ, I am your rejoicing, even as you also are mine.* Should it be my happy lot to be pronounced *faithful over the few things*, committed to me; may I not, on solid grounds, look forward to *the day of the Lord Jesus Christ*; and believe, that you, together with your precursors, and your successors, in knowledge, piety, and usefulness, *will then be my glory, and my joy?*

To bring home to your hearts the subject, here referred to; to impress upon them its solemnity, and importance; let me remind you, *when, where, on what occasion, and before whom, this joy is to be found*: not first; not alone; yet pre-eminently, and in a degree which cannot be described.

It is first found in the present world; in the silence of devout meditation; in the serene contemplations of the solitary walk; in the fervent aspirations of the closet, in the pure precepts, and rich promises, of the Sacred Volume; in the cheerful devotions of the Family; in the solemn services of the Sanctuary; and in the public communion of Christians at the Table of Christ. It is found, also, in no unhappy degree, in the delightful private intercourse of good men; and in that train of beneficent actions, by which they become immediate and rich blessings to the world.

In a more glorious manner will it revive, when we enter the world of spirits, and render to our Lord an account of the manner, in which we have employed the talents entrusted by him to our care. If we shall then appear to have occupied them faithfully in his service; we shall be permitted immediately to enter into his joy.

But the time, mentioned in the text, is different from all these. It is that, which in the Scriptures is emphatically called *the time of the end*: when Christ will come to *judge the world in righteousness; and all, that are in the graves, will hear his voice, and come forth: they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and*

they, that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. All earthly things will then have finished their course. Avarice will have ceased to dig for treasures in the secret chambers of the earth; Ambition to climb the precipices, which in his eye seemed the ascent to Heaven; and Pleasure, to bathe and wanton in the stream of sensuality. Oppression will have ended the work of *grinding the faces of the poor*; and dropped from his withered hand the iron rod. Persecution will feast no more on the blood of Martyrs; Conquest no longer sit and smile, over the tomb of departed nations; nor Pride sigh over the expiring train of menials, the vanishing tables of Luxury, the fading paradise, and the palace of Splendour, crumbled into dust.

The trumpet of civil discord will then have blown its last breath. The frenzy of faction will have terminated; and its final sound have died upon the ear. Its scramble for power, and place, will then be over; together with all the follies and crimes, the base cabals, the foul slanders, the innumerable falsehoods, the black perjuries, and the sale of souls, with which it has been attended. Even liberty itself, that golden image, which the world has worshipped instead of JEHOVAH, will enrapture and engross, will inspire and terrify, will rouse to madness and plunge in misery, no more.

Even the honest, commendable, and delightful, employments, of mankind will be finished. The cheerful sound of the axe, and the hammer, will be dumb. The industrious plough will stop in the unfinished furrow; and the adventurous sail be furled for the last time. The father will no more survey his children at the fire-side with hope, and delight; the mother will cease to smile with inexpressible fondness over the cradled infant; and the husband and wife, to interchange the unequalled tenderness of conjugal love. To the earth it will be truly said, as, in the awful language of prophecy, to *Mystical Babylon*, "The voice of harpers, and of musicians, and of pipers, and of trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee: and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee: and the voice of the bridegroom, and of the bride, shall be heard no more at all in thee."

Even the most venerable and sacred things will then find their earthly termination. The sabbath will dawn in peace and beau-

ty on this polluted world no more : the Sanctuary will cease to be *the house of God, and the gate of Heaven* ; and apostate sinners will no longer *enter in, and be saved*. The voice of prayer will have pronounced its last Amen : the tongue of the preacher will be dumb : and the final song of praise will expire upon the ear.

Far other scenes will then engross the thoughts, and awaken the amazement, of mankind. The funeral day of this great world will have come : and the host of Heaven, and the innumerable nations of men, will be summoned to its obsequies. Its knell the last trumpet will sound. Its end the voice of the Archangel will proclaim in the inexpressibly awful words, "It is done." Earth will tremble throughout all her regions : the graves will heave with one immense convulsion ; and teem with the awaking myriads of deceased men. The land, and the sea, *will give up the dead, which are in them* : and the whole globe will be covered with an universal resurrection of the great family of *Adam*.

Above, will be seen, surrounded by *the glory of his Father, and by all his holy Angels, the Judge of the quick and the dead, coming in the clouds, with power and great glory*. All nations at his awful summons will take their places on his right hand, and on his left. *The books will be opened ; and another book will be opened, which is the book of Life : and the dead will be judged out of those things, which are written in the books, according to the deeds, done in the body*. To one division of this vast multitude he will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world : " and, to the other, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Then the final flames, kindled in innumerable places at once, will wander over the surface of this great globe ; consume the piles of human grandeur, and the monuments of human ingenuity ; waste the plains ; dissolve the mountains ; and blot out of remembrance this polluted region of error and iniquity. Then *will the wicked go away into everlasting punishment ; and the righteous ascend to the Heaven of heavens, to enter upon the complete enjoyment of life eternal*.

In this season of awful expectation and final decision, of universal convulsion and immense ruin, what emotions shall you, and I, experience, if we may then behold every danger past, every

fear vanished, and every sorrow fled; if we may see, and feel, our hopes all ended in full fruition, our joy beginning its everlasting career, and a crown of glory holden out to us by our Judge, to reward our sincere, though frail, obedience. All these awful scenes we shall witness. *Our eyes shall behold them, and not another.* In them all we shall take our own share: a share, glorious and delightful, if we have *loved righteousness, and hated iniquity*; but infinitely deplorable, if *with a hard and impenitent heart we have treasured up wrath against the day of wrath.* How devoutly is it to be wished, that we may obtain the former happy lot, and escape the incomprehensible ruin of the latter.

With these amazing things in full view, can you fail to ask, "Where, when, and how, are these immeasurable blessings to be secured?" Let me ask in return, "Where, when, and how, did *Paul, and Silas, and Timothy,* and their innumerable converts, secure them? *The God of the spirits of all flesh* has given to mankind but one law concerning this momentous subject. Life is the time, and the present world, the place, in which this mighty work has been done by all, who have accomplished it; and in which, if ever done, it must be done by *us.* We, like them, must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; must repent of our sins with all the heart; and must exhibit a life of piety to God, and beneficence to mankind. We must *deny ourselves; take up the cross;* and vanquish temptations, lusts, and enemies. In a word, a life of Evangelical virtue is the only basis, on which the joy of that solemn day can be founded. He, who with this spirit of the Gospel has seen Christ *hungry, and thirsty, and naked, and a stranger, and sick, and in prison;* and has relieved him even in *the least of his brethren;* will then be placed at his right hand, arrayed in immortal glory; and will find *an open, and abundant, entrance ministered to him into the everlasting kingdom of his Lord and Saviour.*

This spirit is the true, the only, excellence of the soul. It is the glory of angels: it is the image of God. To communicate it to man, Christ died, and rose again: and the Spirit of Grace descended from heaven. From its first appearance in the parents of mankind, after their apostasy, seraphs have watched its progress with earnest hope, and unmingled complacency. At the news of its commencement in a single, wandering prodigal, all

Heaven renews its joy, and resounds with gratulation. Eternal wisdom beholds it as an undefiled emanation from itself; and smiles with boundless delight over its infantine existence, and its everlasting advancement towards perfection.

From these considerations flows, of course, the great practical use of all that has been said. If such be the cause of hope fulfilled, and joy begun, at the great day; you are most affectingly taught, that *you must now lay the foundation of these inestimable blessings*. From this seat of learning, where you have lived four years, with many privileges, many enjoyments, and many hopes; in the midst of companions by whom you are loved, and under the direction of instructors to whom you are highly endeared; you are to depart into a world of pride and ambition, of avarice and sensuality, of temptation and sin. At this eventful period you need all your own wisdom, watchfulness, firmness, and prayers; all the prayers, counsels and assistance, of your friends; and, what is infinitely more than them all, the protection and blessing of your God. Immensely do you need to remember, as a consideration ever to be before your eyes, and invariably to govern your conduct, that *in life you must lay the foundation of your joy in the presence of Christ*. Resolve, then, on this sacred day, and in this holy place, that a truth, so intertwined with your whole well-being, shall never be forgotten by you; never fail to influence; never cease to control.

You will neither wish, nor be able, to forget the scenes, through which you have passed in this happy place. No period of your lives will be remembered with more pleasure; no spot of earth seem more exempted from the miseries of the curse. The quiet, the order, the honourable and delightful employments, which you have found here; the pleasing companions with whom you have lived; the friendships which you have formed, and the numberless kind offices which you have interchanged; together with the affection, care and instructions, of your teachers; will rise continually to your view. The little sufferings, on the contrary, to which life is exposed even here; the youthful rivalries; and the momentary dislikes; will of course be forgotten. You will often think, and say, that no time of your life passed with equal enjoyment, nor with equal freedom from suffering.

While your memory is thus frequently, and pleasingly, employed; let me especially persuade you to call to mind the truths, which you have been taught; the moral and religious precepts, so often, and so solemnly, enjoined upon you; the counsels of piety, which you have given to each other; your affectionate assemblies for prayer; your solemn public devotions; and your delightful union around the table of Christ. Let those of you, who have publicly professed the Religion of the Redeemer, remember daily, that *the vows of the Lord, your God, are upon you; and that you cannot go back.* Let those of you, who have hitherto delayed to perform this great duty, hasten *with all lowliness, and meekness of mind and with many tears for your sins, to confess Christ before men; and to witness the good profession, even as he did.*

Remember, I beseech you, that he, who died for you, hath said, "One thing is needful." In this declaration he has told you, that there is no other needful thing. *Choose, therefore, that good part, which shall never be taken from you.* While others toil, and watch, and grieve, to dig deeper in the mines of avarice: while others strive, and pant, to climb the heights of ambition: while others imbrute themselves in the sty of sensuality: let it be your labour, your delight, your glory, to *lay up treasure in the Heavens; to seek the honour which cometh from God only; and to acquire the pleasures, which at his right hand flow forever.*

Begin now; or, if you have already begun, advance from this day; the work of your salvation. Into the way of *well-doing* resolutely enter. In it *patiently* and *perseveringly continue.* Suffer no day to pass, without doing some real good. Let every morning, and every evening, open the doors of your closets, and invite you to *pray to your Father, who is in secret.* Let every Sabbath behold you *going up to the house of the Lord.* Be his *tabernacles ever amiable* in your eyes; and *one day, spent in his courts, better than a thousand.* There the Lord God is a Sun, and a shield: there he gives grace and glory: and there he withholds no good thing from them, that walk uprightly.

Daily, and eagerly, diffuse religion around the circle of your connections. To them you can do good, every day you live. God, who has placed them always within your reach, demands of

your continual efforts for their well-being. How delightful will it be to find *them your hope, your joy, your crown of rejoicing, in the day of Christ!*

To your neighbourhoods, become blessings by every kind of office in your power. Speak truth alway, only, and with a sacred watchfulness over your tongues. Do justly, with the utmost strictness, and impartiality. Love all men: show kindness to all, with whom you are concerned; especially extend mercy to suffering, with largeness of heart: and remember, that *God loveth the cheerful giver.*

As you advance in years, in reputation, and in influence, make it a commanding rule of your lives to *befriend young men.* They, as your own experience will powerfully teach you, will ordinarily need, more than any others, your advice, your reproofs, and your assistance. By your advice they will be more profited; by your reproofs, more amended; and for your assistance, more grateful; than those, who are older. Vigourously, and persuasively, impress upon their minds the supreme importance of religion. Whatever you say on this great subject *they will feel.* The golden moment you may chance to find, and may happily seize, in which they may be rescued from destruction, and directed to heaven. In every such case, *you will save a soul from death; and cover by this glorious act of charity a multitude of sins.*

Love your Country. Learn, as well as you can, its real interests; and pursue them steadily; unawed by the fear of opposition; unallured by the hope of office, or the desire of gain. Court the approbation, and tremble at the reproach, of conscience: but regard with indifference the popular breath, whether trumpeting slander, or shouting applause.

Never look either for subsistence, or for character, to popular suffrage, or governmental appointments; to public salaries, or official perquisites. He, who seeks for property, or reputation, from these sources, will, long before he is aware, have set up his soul at auction; and sold it for a place. For character, trust to your conduct; for subsistence, to your hands. In the wretched pursuit of office you will find temptations, and snares, and sins, at every step; will turn your backs upon your God; and wan-

der every day farther and farther from virtue, and hope, and heaven.

Build up every where the church of Christ; and every where spread, support, and foster, his Religion. Cherish it at home; and send it abroad. Labour with all your power to sow the seeds of eternal life, wherever there is a soil to receive them; and to convey the tidings of salvation, wherever there is an ear to hear them. On the final day it will be transporting to remember, that you have befriended *the least of Christ's brethren*. It will be divinely extatic to remember, that you have befriended them all. *Let your right hand forget her cunning, ere you fail to prefer Zion above your chief joy.* The first good, which you can do for mankind, is to live, as the Gospel requires you to live; *to adorn the doctrine of God, your Saviour.* *Let your light, therefore, so shine before others, that they, beholding your good works, may glorify your Father who is in Heaven.*

To secure these delightful purposes, remember especially, that God is always where you are, and an awful witness of whatever you think, speak, or do. Continually refer your conduct to his omniscient eye; and regard it as the materials of your final account. Feel, that *his favour is life*, and that his anger is death.

Finally, seek always the company, the conversation, and friendship, of good men. They will furnish you a thousand unforeseen blessings in their kindness, their counsel, their example, and their prayers. *He, that walketh with wise men, shall be wise.* Of good men, in ancient times, it was said by the voice of God himself, "They, that feared the Lord, spake often one to another." What was the consequence? "They shall be mine, saith JEHOVAH, in the day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son, that serveth him."

Can you, can I, want motives for such a life? What will procure us peace and consolation in the world? What will array the face of conscience in smiles; and tune her voice to harmony? What will gain the approbation, the friendship, and the prayers, of wise and virtuous men? What will make us blessings to our own souls, our families, our friends, our neighbourhoods, our country, and the world? What will best requite the love of our

divine Redeemer? What will assure to us the blessing of forgiven sin, and the favour of a pardoning God? What will shed serenity, and peace, over the evening of life; and enable the setting sun to go down without a cloud? What will sooth the pain, and languor, of the last sickness; and disarm the final enemy of his sting? What will light up the lamp of hope in the grave? What will inspire the unembodied spirit with confidence, when it enters upon its lonely flight into the invisible world? What will open to its view the distant glory of Heaven, dimly, but extatically, dawning on its wistful eyes, and disclosing its untried way to the throne of infinite Mercy? A life, spent in honouring God, and doing good to mankind, will accomplish all these delightful things; will enable us to *die the death of the righteous, and will make our last end like his.*

Is there, then, one of you, who will not lead such a life. You are now all before me; all in the house of God; all employed in his worship. How solemn, how endeared, the assembly! how divine the employment! how becoming is it for immortal beings to hold their farewell meeting with their companions, and with each other, in such a place, on such a day, and for such a purpose!

These instructions are the last, which I shall ever address to you. Regard them as my dying words. Let them sink deep into your hearts. That I regard you with strong affection, I know you cannot doubt. From this affection they all spring. To your best good, to your eternal good, they are all directed. Forget them not. Let them not fail of their full influence to produce this good.

You *may* live; I hope every one of you will live; through many years to come. How desirable will it be to live in such a manner, as to find, daily, *the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, you have had your conversation in the world!* You must die. How joyful will it be to *fall asleep in the Lord Jesus;* give up your souls into the hands of God; and be able to say, with *Madison.* to those around you, "See, in what peace a Christian can die." You will rise again. How transporting will it be to see you all ascending from the grave, with bodies, *sown in corruption, weakness, and dishonour, but raised in incorruption, power,*

and glory ; and arrayed in the youth and beauty of heaven. The world around you will be convulsed with its last agonies. How will you feel to be able, while multitudes are *calling to the rocks, and to the mountains to fall on them, and to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb*, steadfastly, and serenely, to enjoy *the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing, of the great God, even your Saviour Jesus Christ!* You must be judged. How blessed will it be to behold you all summoned to the right hand of your Judge ; the place of his friends and followers ; the seat of distinction ; the goal of immortal glory !

The final sentence you must hear. What emotions will you experience, should *the Judge of the quick and the dead* address to all of you those enrapturing words, “ Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world ! ” How solemn, how angelic, will be the flight, to ascend, with you in his immortal train, to the Heaven of heavens ; the house of JEHOVAH ; the mansion of everlasting joy ! Finally, what tongue can describe, what mind can conceive, the ecstasy of mingling with *the church of the first-born* ; of conversing with *the innumerable company of Angels* ; of standing before the throne of God, *accepted and beloved* ; and of uniting in the eternal song, “ Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him, that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever ! ”

In that divine assembly ; at that great era in the kingdom of Jehovah ; that birth-day of the *new heavens* and the *new earth* ; when those undefiled mansions shall be filled with all their inhabitants ; when, like the drops, that form *the bow in the cloud, in the day of rain*, the children of God shall be illumined by *the Sun of Righteousness* with supernal beauty ; and all, united, shall form one perfect circle, arrayed in the endless diversities of immortal light and glory ; let me ardently hope ; and Oh may *the Father of all mercies* fulfil the hope ; that not one of you will be found missing.

SERMON XXIII.

ON CONFORMITY TO THIS WORLD.

PREACHED TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE BACCALAUREATE
IN 1808.



ROMANS xii. 2.

And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

THIS Chapter is the beginning of *St. Paul's* practical Application of the preceding parts of this Epistle. It commences in the first verse with an earnest request of the Apostle to the *Roman* Christians, that they would *present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God*: in other words, that they would consecrate their bodies to his service *finally, and without reserve*, as a sacrifice is consecrated to him. In the text he urges them to *be no longer conformed, to this world, but to be transformed, by the renewing of their mind*, in such a manner, that they may *prove, or experimentally discern, the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*. In the former verse, the Apostle beseeches the *Romans* to devote their external powers and actions wholly to the service of their Maker. In the text, he exhorts them not to suffer either their external or internal conduct to be conformed to the opinions, or practices, of *the World*; and so to regulate the state of their minds, as that this shall be the happy consequence. The words may be thus rendered. *Be not fashion-*

ed like unto this World; but give to your life a new form, or shape, by means of that renovation of your understanding, which ye have lately received from the Spirit of God.

As the *Roman* Christians are here directly spoken of as *already renewed*; the transformation, mentioned, cannot be *that great change from sin to holiness, customarily styled Regeneration*; nor the conformity to the world, that general spirit of sinning, found in *unregenerate men*. Both the conformity here forbidden, and the new fashioning or transformation of character here enjoined, plainly respect *the course of life*; and the doctrines and practices, according to which it should, or should not, be regulated. To the opinions and practices of the World the *Romans*, and, for the same reasons, all others who are under the Gospel, are forbidden to conform. To the doctrines, and precepts or rules of practice, contained in the Gospel, they are required to conform. In doing this, they are also required to avail themselves of the *renovation, or spiritual illumination, of their understanding*: i. e. to make use of the *heavenly light, which they now enjoy*, for the direction and purification of their conduct.

These explanations, will, I hope, either prevent, or remove, all doubts concerning the construction of this passage of Scripture. I shall, therefore, proceed to *address the directions, given in it, to the Youths, who are just finishing their Academical education in this place*. The two precepts in the text are so intimately related, that they may without any disadvantage be considered together: every departure from conformity to this world being a real advancement in the transformation here enjoined. Concerning both sides of this subject, therefore, I shall make such observations, as shall occur to me, *promiscuously, and without any formal marks of separation*. In performing this task I shall be necessitated to confine myself to a few particulars only. The field, opened by the text, is in a sense boundless; and can be barely entered, at the present time. The particular subjects of conformity to the world, which I shall especially select, will not be the obvious, the gross, and the scandalous; but such, as are scarcely suspected of coming within the reach of the prohibition; such, as are generally esteemed decent, often honourable, and perhaps almost always safe. They will be *schemes of thinking*, generally believed to be almost,

if not entirely, free from error; and *schemes of acting*, which, if not absolutely right, are considered as far remote from being wrong.

While I request the attention of my audience generally; I solicit with peculiar earnestness, I think I may with the best reasons expect, the attention of *those, for whom this discourse was peculiarly written*. You, my young friends, have received from me many instructions. I entertain not a doubt, that you have believed them all to be given with sincerity and affection; with a full conviction that they were true, and with the most earnest wishes that they might be useful. In this discourse I shall give to you, *as a Class*, my last counsels. It is my design, that they shall be just and Scriptural: it will be your part to make them profitable to yourselves.

Let me exhort you, then, not to be conformed to this world,

1st. *In your Formation of a Standard of Moral Character.*

Men, who think at all, universally adopt, either from reflection or accident, certain prime Rules of *thinking* and *acting*, to which they have an almost constant and peculiar reference, *both in directing their own conduct, and in judging concerning that of others*. *These Rules, taken together, are what I intend by a Standard of Moral Character*. They are not a standard of *moral action* only, but of *moral thinking* also. Thought is the source of action; as action is the end of thought. All our actions derive their moral nature solely from the state of our thoughts; so that *as a man thinketh, so he is*. Such, in other words, as is the character of his thoughts, is the character of the man: never better, in any case, than might be fairly supposed from the comparative tenor of the doctrines which he holds.

The importance of such a *Standard*, as I have mentioned, lies in this fact: that the man refers to it, both when he is, and when he is not, aware of such a reference, most of his thoughts, and most of his conduct. If doctrines presented to his contemplation, agree with this standard; they are, in his view, sound and orthodox: when they disagree, they are erroneous and heretical. Actions, accordant with it, he readily pronounces to be virtuous. Such as vary from it he considers as vicious; or, at least, as defective in worth. In the same manner, also, he estimates the characters of other men.

The *World*, by which you are here to understand not only those who oppose the Gospel, but a great part of those also who professedly adhere to it, has formed various Standards of Moral character; all of which are greatly lowered beneath the point of Evangelical perfection. Each of the divisions of this great body of mankind has *its own Code of primary Rules* concerning thinking and acting, by which it proposes to regulate, and by which it does in fact chiefly regulate, all its estimates of moral character. Whatever comes up to this standard those who adopt it pronounce to be right, wise, and good. Whatever falls short of it they declare to be so far defective in truth, wisdom, or worth.

This subject, like many others, will be best illustrated by *Examples*. Those, who compose one class of such men, style themselves *Men of honour*. To be a man of honour, in the full sense annexed by them to this phrase, is, in their view, to have attained the perfection of the human character. But of what is this perfection composed? "The *Law of honour*," says *Dr. Paley*, "is a system of rules, constructed by people of fashion, and calculated to facilitate their intercourse with one another, and for no other purpose. Consequently it forbids nothing, but what tends to incommode this intercourse. Accordingly, it allows profaneness and impiety in every form; cruelty, injustice, fraud, falsehood, and a total want of charity to inferiors. In the same manner, also, it openly permits fornication, adultery, drunkenness, prodigality, duelling, and revenge in the extreme. The virtues opposite to these vices it neither requires, nor commends; such as temperance, chastity, justice, truth, kindness to inferiors, and piety to God."

The Law of honour is the Standard of Moral character, adopted by these men. The good man, the best of men, as estimated according to this standard, i. e. the man most approved by men of honour, may, therefore, be an impious, unjust, dishonest, cruel, wretch; putrid with lewdness and intemperance; a smoke in the nostrils of his Creator; and a mere blast upon the human race. Yet according to this standard he may have reached the utmost perfection, of which those, who adopt it, consider man as capable. The danger of forming a false Standard of moral character must, I think, be strongly evident in this example.

Another class of men estimate Moral character by *the Law of the land*. These are usually the men of wealth; or, in better terms, those, who make the acquisition of wealth the chief object of their pursuit. The former class is composed of the proud and ambitious. The field of pleasure is perhaps equally divided between both. The good man of this class is he, who punctually pays his debts and taxes; makes such bargains only, as are legal; buys at the lowest price, and sells for as much as he can get; does every thing which the law requires, and nothing which it forbids. It cannot be denied, that such a man is ordinarily a far more desirable member of society, than the man of honour. No more can it be denied, that, when he comes up to the full demands of this standard, he may still be totally destitute of piety; may turn a deaf ear to poverty and suffering; may hate, and only hate, his enemies; may neglect all the duties of affection and tenderness; may be unkind to his wife, negligent of his children, and hard hearted towards all men.

Other classes have still other standards. *Men of science* usually consider distinguished talents, laboriously employed in the acquisition and improvement of knowledge, as the object, eminently entitled to their admiration and applause. *Men of taste* regard an extensive acquaintance with the objects of taste; particularly with the fine arts of eloquence, poetry, sculpture, painting, music, building, and gardening, together with the elegant and magnificent effects, which genius has in these several ways produced; as claiming, on the best grounds, their unqualified esteem. With another class of mankind the most respectable human character is *the man of fashion*. Here merit lies supremely in elegance of dress, gracefulness of manners, skill, and taste, in customary amusements, and a happy observance of fashionable decorum. The rules, by which these several classes judge, I call Standards of moral character; because they make them such, in estimating all degrees of human respectability, and the want of it, by the degree in which the human character approximates to their respective standards. Accordingly such, as approach, or arrive at, any one of these standards, are by those who adopt it approved, and commended, as excellent: while those of an opposite character are invariably condemned.

Erroneous moral standards are also set up by classes of men, and concerning subjects, professedly religious. In the view of multitudes, it is a sufficient establishment of a religious character to have been born, baptized, and educated, within the pale of a particular church ; and to have attended regularly upon its worship. In the view of others, decency of character and amiableness of deportment are invested with the name of Religion. With others, it is sufficient to speak truth, to render commutative justice, and to give liberally, particularly to the poor. With some, common good nature passes currently for genuine virtue. Others place it in warm feelings, and bright, visionary views of divine subjects : while others still consider it as sufficient to talk with discernment, fervour, and frequency, concerning themes of Religion.

Concerning all these standards of moral character, two very important remarks should be made. The first is, *that every one of them is totally defective : leaving real excellence out of that list of qualifications, which is formed, only to comprise it.* A man may be every thing, which I have mentioned ; and yet have nothing in his character, which will recommend him to the favour, or render him amiable in the sight, of God. The only standard of moral character allowed in the Scriptures, or defensible to the eye of Common sense, when acquainted with the Scriptures, is the moral law. He, who *loves God with all the heart, and his neighbour as himself*, is a perfect man. He who does this imperfectly, (and no man does it perfectly,) is excellent, just as far as he does it, and no farther. There is no other excellence beside this ; and every thing else, however convenient, pleasing, or reputable, is in a moral view mere trash : a counterfeit, in which the value of gold is stamped upon dross : a mere semblance of real worth at the best : and in several of the instances, a wretched substitution of vice for virtue.

The second remark, which should be made here, is this : *Every one of these classes of men is entirely satisfied with its own standard, and never thinks of inquiring whether any other rules are necessary to estimate, or any other qualification to form, moral character.* This is unanswerably certain from the daily conversation of the individuals who compose them. Listen to that conversation ; and

you will find, that these persons approve nothing, commend nothing, and aim at nothing, beside what is contained in their respective standards; and that all, which lies without, is either censured or disregarded.

But it is evident beyond a debate, that not one of these standards comprises any real excellence. Of course, none of those who adopt them aims at obtaining for himself, or demands at all from others, the least degree of such excellence. Each is entirely satisfied, if he comes up to his own rule: for this rule he considers as the true boundary of worth. Of consequence, he does not attempt any thing further; nor consider such an attempt as claiming even a momentary regard. There is, therefore, the most terrible probability, that he will never become at all better, in any respect, than his rule requires him to be. For he will not even mistrust, that there is any thing better. Hence he will live, and die, and go to the judgment, as the case may be, a mere man of honour; a mere conformist to the law of the land; a man of science, taste, or fashion; a Christian in form and garb; a good natured companion; or a skilful talker on religious subjects.

Had each of these persons originally proposed to himself *the law of God, as the only standard of perfection*; and tried himself from time to time by this perfect rule of righteousness; it seems impossible, that he should not have felt something more to be indispensably necessary to constitute him excellent in this world, and accepted in that which is to come. It seems impossible, for example, that the duellist should, in this case, advance so coolly towards death and eternity, to present before the bar of God his hands crimsoned with the blood of his neighbour.

To you, then, it cannot fail to be of incomprehensible importance, to separate yourselves entirely from the world in the great business of forming *your* Standard of moral character. You will never be better, than your Rule supposes. If that involves no real excellence; you will have none. The rule itself, independently of all other considerations, will prove a fatal snare to you, prevent you from holiness, and shut you out from heaven.

Let me further inform you, that you may propose to yourselves a Scriptural Standard; i. e. one generally Scriptural; and yet may so contract, and prune, and pare it, as to derive from the Rule.

thus fashioned, serious and lasting injuries. You may be Christians; and may yet so lower the demands of Christianity upon you; so relax the strictness of evangelical doctrines; so narrow the limits, and so lessen the force, of evangelical precepts; as greatly to swerve from truth and duty, when you suppose yourselves believing and obedient. You may transgress, where you suppose yourselves to fulfil; and omit, while you consider yourselves as performing. Christians often, through the influence of their remaining corruption, particularly through a general spirit of sloth, negligence, and aversion to that strictness of thought and life, which is necessary to keep them near the point of evangelical perfection, lower, in their own minds, the Scriptural doctrines and precepts, so as to accommodate them conveniently to their own lax habits.

With a variety of specious glosses devised by themselves, or already provided to their hand by others, they smooth the ruggedness of hard texts, narrow the limits of painful precepts, and fritter away the import of difficult doctrines, to such a degree, as to fit them for their own more comfortable use, and make them agree with that imperfect, sluggish, half-worldly Christianity, which they have chosen to adopt. In all this they are *conformed to the world*; and in no part of this conduct ought *we* to be conformed to *them*. Remember, that, the higher you aim, the higher will you reach. He, who points his views at perfection, though indeed he will not be perfect, will yet advance nearer to it, than if he had pointed them at a lower mark. Whenever a low standard of moral character is generally adopted by a community; *the best members* of that community will either not be Christians at all, but, as will ordinarily be the fact, merely decent worldly men; or they will be dull, cold-hearted Christians; members of the church of *Sardis*; having *a name to live*, but even to the human eye really dead. *The second class* will consist of plain, professed worldlings; destitute even of a pretended regard to religion. *The third* will be composed of mere profligates. The best of those in the best class will hardly keep religion alive in themselves. Those, who keep it alive in the world, who awaken it in their fellow-men, and who convey it down to succeeding generations, by their warm affections, exemplary lives, and vigorous efforts, will in such a community be

sought for in vain ; and *the places, which have once known them, will, ordinarily, for ages know them no more.*

2dly. *Let me exhort you not to be conformed to the Fashionable Opinions, and Practices, of the World.*

Of the numerous particulars, indicated by this comprehensive head, I shall select very few ; and those will be of the nature formerly mentioned.

One of the favourite dogmas, repeated with no small frequency, pleasure, and emphasis, by men of the world, is that *we were sent into the world to enjoy life.* Though, in a certain limited sense, this doctrine may be true, because our Creator intended, that we should find some degree of enjoyment even here ; yet, in the sense intended, nothing is more absurdly or ridiculously false. Two considerations prove the truth of this remark in an unanswerable manner. *The first* is, that, if God sent us hither to enjoy life, he has been miserably disappointed of his purpose. Witness the pain, sickness and sorrow ; the want, danger, fear, and doubt ; the oppression, injustice, and cruelty ; which haunt man from the cradle to the grave. Witness the death, which with a thousand terrors and agonies closes our earthly career, and hurries us into eternity. *The second* is, that this very doctrine is directly subversive of our best interests both here and hereafter. The Enjoyment, always intended in this declaration, is that, which is found in popularity, power, wealth, and sensual pleasure. All human experience has proved, all sober men have confessed, that the pursuit of these objects is not the pursuit of happiness ; that the objects themselves have not happiness to give ; and that the devotees to this pursuit have, even when most successful, been in all ages the victims of disappointment and sorrow. That *it is more blessed to give, than to receive ;* or to do good, than to gain it ; and that *godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come ;* are truths, pencilled in sun-beams on the experience of man. They are truths, which, if we were willing to be wise by the experience of others, no sober man would ever question. Still, the men of this world hold now, and have ever held, the contrary doctrine. Should it be adopted by you ; it will lead you, as an gnis fatuus, from the high way of happiness and duty into every

devious path ; lose you in an inextricable wilderness ; hurry you over rocks and precipices ; or plunge you into marshes or quicksands. God sent you, and let me exhort you to believe that he sent you, into this world, to do your duty ; to love, and fear, and serve, and glorify him. In *this way*, he intended you should find your real enjoyment. You, it is true, may refuse to walk in it ; but you cannot make any other way either happy or safe. *The counsel of the Lord*, in this respect as well as in every other, *standeth forever ; and the thoughts of his heart to all generations*. In vain will you seek to change the nature of things. You will find happiness where he has placed it : every where else you will look for it in vain.

In the mean time, if you embrace this doctrine, you will become just such beings, as those, who have embraced it before you. With growing, restless, inextinguishable desires, desires incapable of being satisfied, you will thirst, and toil, and hunt, for office, suffrages, popular applause, gold, splendour, and pleasure. And what will you gain ? Look, for an answer to this question, to those, who have already tried the chase. Dismiss, however from this list the train of wretched men, who have worried themselves in the pursuit without success ; and who, with haggard looks, and broken hearts, hang upon those around them with bitter complaints of the injuries done to their merit, the stupid insensibility of their countrymen, and the base intrigues of their fortunate rivals. Look only at the successful adventurers. Mark the devotee to office. Reckon up the fears, toils, anxieties, and distresses, through which he has waded, to gain possession of the coveted object. Pause upon the sacrifices of conscience, which he has made, to acquire the popular favour ; the mean compliances, which he undergoes, to secure the good will of his superiors ; the prostitution of his reason in defending false principles and of his tongue in uttering false declarations ; the frail tenure by which he has holden his office ; and the deplorable mortification, with which he has lost it. See him the object of general jealousy ; a mark for every scribbler to shoot at ; blackened over by the brush of slander ; and pierced through with the darts of ridicule. Remember, that all this while he has scarcely known that he had a God to be worshipped, or a soul to be saved ; and

that, without a hope or desire of heaven, he is crawling along the downhill side of life, only to find a solitary grave: and you will never believe, that his chase for power was an enviable career.

Nor does the miser make a more hopeful figure in this picture of man. Follow him to and from the mole-hill, which he has been struggling to heap up through a series of years by night as well as by day. Behold him dragging his load of dirt and dross, with the same drudgery, to which a hard master condemns an African slave. Such a slave he voluntarily makes himself throughout life: willingly a stranger to convenience and comfort, and judicially sentenced by himself to subsist on bare necessaries. In the mean time he is distressed with fears at every approaching foot, lest it should invade his accumulated treasures; and starts by day, and watches by night, under the apprehensions of loss, encroachment, and plunder. In this weary, narrow path of an emmet he winds his shortening excursions; until death treads upon his mole-hill, and buries him in its ruins.

Of the man of show it needs only to be said, that he lives upon the gaze, the admiration, and the flattery, of his fellow-men. Thin, unsubstantial food for an immortal mind! When others cease to admire, and to applaud, he ceases to be happy. The trifling, fluttering, buzzing course of such an insect, as this, can only engage attention for a moment. A gaudy thing may attract, but can never fix, the eye. Another gaudy thing soon takes its place. To this succeeds another. All may shine through their day; but not one of those, who stare at the butter-flies, while they are passing, will ask at night what is become of them.

Turn your eyes finally to the Epicurean child of voluptuousness. How little are his darling pursuits elevated above those of the swine. Life to him is not *an accepted time*; but a time to eat, and drink, and sleep: *a day, not of salvation, but of lewdness*; of pleasures, in which brutes are his superiors, because their enjoyments are on the one hand lawful, and on the other innoxious to health and life. This man has renounced the rational character, and made animals his kindred, his peers, and his patterns. After a life, usually a short one, spent in a toilsome pursuit of sensual gratification; with a broken constitution, diseased limbs, and a palsied palate; the power of enjoyment lost; his soul shrunk and

withered, and his body fattened for the grave ; he lies down in the dust, pampered so laboriously, and so long, only to become a richer feast for worms.

Such is the life, and death, of men, who declare themselves *sent into the world to enjoy*. Can you see any thing in these men to envy, admire, or approve? Can God approve them? Have they at all answered the end of their creation? Has their existence been at all honourable to Him, or useful to the universe? Have they not plainly been spots on the creation?

God sent you into the world, to do your duty, to fill up your life with usefulness, and thus to honour his great Name ; and, by a patient continuance in this happy course, to secure to yourselves glory, honour, and immortality, beyond the grave. Firmly lay hold on this plain, reasonable, Scriptural doctrine ; and let all your conduct prove, that it has a seat in your hearts, and a controlling influence on your lives.

A kindred opinion to that, which I have last censured, or rather a branch of it, is this, *that Amusements are, peculiarly, the employment of the present life.* In conformity to this doctrine, multitudes of the gay and opulent devote to amusements the principal part of their lives. To dress, to visit, to receive visits, to ride for pleasure, to game, to dance, and to frequent the theatre, occupy almost all their time, as well as thoughts ; and their final account will be chiefly a mere recital of their amusements. I need not ask you what will be the sentence founded on such a recital.

Serious and useful business is the employment, destined by God to fill up the little circle of our earthly being. With these people, such business, when it exists at all, is a mere preparation for amusement. With wise and good men, amusement is only a relaxation from business ; admitted, because it is necessary for such frail natures as ours, which are soon exhausted by graver employments. To these giddy, fluttering beings it is the only serious employment of life ; and they never cease to sing, and sport, till that fatal frost arrives, which terminates the little summer of their existence. There can be no greater contrast, than this, to the laborious activity of Christ, and his Apostles.

I shall only add, under this head, what may be called *the world-*

by mode of observing the Sabbath. By this I intend not an avowed profanation of it, but a more decent mode of turning it from a sacred day into a secular one: a kind of *genteel* observation of the sabbath; continually found among persons, who make the journey of life along the confines of religion and impiety, at the half-way distance between both. These persons usually attend public worship with much decorum; commend, or censure, the prayers, the sermon, and the psalmody; converse about the strangers who were at church; criticise the dresses and fashions; rehearse the public and private news; read books of entertainment, newspapers, and letters; write letters in return; make, and receive, visits, especially from their particular friends, and from strangers.

In these, and the like, modes of conduct they contrive to while away fifty-two sabbaths in a year, without any very indecent conduct, and without a single act of religion. They never really worship God. They never really seek salvation. Nor do they advance by all their decorum, nor by all their sabbaths, a single step towards heaven. To them this divinely *accepted time*, to them *the whole day of salvation*, is lost, not by profaneness, but by decency. Life, to them, is spent in making a compromise between God and the world; and in so blending religion with sin, that they may be worldlings here, and yet be glorified spirits hereafter. He, who does not design to keep the sabbath holy, from the beginning to the end, will never religiously keep it at all. He, who does not *turn away his foot from finding his own pleasure* on this holy day will never find it *a time of acceptance, nor a day of salvation*.

3dly. *Avoid, as much as possible, being governed in your opinions and conduct by Words, and Names.*

This direction will probably seem to you mere trifling. I trust, however, I shall show you, that it is of very serious importance. The idolatry of the heathen was occupied in the worship of a great variety of false Deities; such as men, brutes, stocks of wood, and images of stone. The idolatry of multitudes, who call themselves Christians, is rendered to *Words, and Names*; particularly to those which are called *general and abstract terms*. A part of these words seem to take the place of those, which our sa-

vages, and some other heathen nations, style *good spirits*. Another part appear to be considered as partaking of the nature of *evil spirits*. The *former* class receive those devoirs of men, which arise from *respect*. The *latter* have a kind of homage paid to them, which is originated only by *dread*.

When Infidels attack Christianity, it is remarkable, that they scarcely ever call it by its real and proper names: such as *Christianity, Religion, Piety, and Virtue*. Instead of these, they substitute *Fanaticism, Enthusiasm, Superstition, Blind Zeal*, and others of the like import. By these formidable names multitudes of persons, such especially, as were young, have been frightened away from Religion, who, not improbably, might have marched coolly up to the mouth of a cannon. Their own doctrines, in the mean time, Infidels have dignified with the names of *Reason, and Philosophy*; and their character with that of *free-thinking*. To these pleasant sounds, thousands have bent their knees in humble homage, and rendered up their souls as a free-will offering.

With a similar spirit, and with exactly the same propriety, men of latitudinarian sentiments extensively style themselves *Rational Christians, Liberal minded Christians* and *Men of liberality*. Persons, in the mean time, who differ from them by a stricter adherence to the doctrines and duties of the Gospel, they characterize as *rigid, superstitious, fanatical, enthusiastic, narrow minded, zealots, and bigots*. From this language you would be naturally led to suppose, that the men, who give these names, were more rational, more severe students of Theology, men of sounder understanding, more candid, more devoted to the pleasure, and more solicitous about the will, of God, than their antagonists. But nothing is farther from the truth, than such a supposition. The whole of what is really meant is no more than this; that they are more indifferent to the truth of God; more regardless of his pleasure; more heedless of the declarations, doctrines, and duties, of the Gospel; more disposed to rely on their own reason, and less on the Scriptures, for the regulation of their lives, and the safe establishment of their final destinies.

Does *liberality*, as it respects religious subjects, consist with the most reverential and sacred regard to the truth of God, or

not? If it does; then he, who most exactly and strictly adheres to the truth of God, is undoubtedly the truly liberal man. If it does not; then liberality is inconsistent with Christianity. "To the law, and to the testimony," says *Isaiah*: "if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Does it consist with paring away the meaning of the Scriptures? If it does, the Infidel, who cuts them all away at once, is undoubtedly an eminently liberal man; and is entirely justified, when he heaps upon those, who style themselves rational and liberal Christians, the very names of bigotry, superstition, and fanaticism, which they cast so freely upon others. *Moses* thought differently concerning this subject. "Thou shalt not add unto his words," said this divine writer, "nor diminish ought from them." *St. John* was of a different opinion. "If any man add unto the words of this book; God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in it. If any man take away from the words of this book; God shall take away his part out of the book of life." *St. Paul* was of a different opinion. "Let God be true; but every man a liar:" i. e. every man, who opposes the truth of his Maker.

Liberality is a term, which was formerly used to denote a branch, or exercise, of real virtue. If it be now thus used; the most virtuous, the most strictly religious, man is undoubtedly the most liberal man. It was formerly used, with respect to the subject in hand, to denote a fair, candid construction of the Scriptures; an equitable openness to argument and evidence; a disposition to receive the truth readily, and to adhere to it faithfully. Liberality, in this sense, is an honour to human nature.

At the present time, both these terms are extensively used in a very different sense. *Rational Christianity*, so far as I can understand most, who deal in this language, denotes, with respect to its *doctrines*, such a construction of the Scriptures, as shall make them accord, not with themselves, not with the plain and obvious meaning of their words, but with a *pre-conceived, and pre-determined, religious system*; with a philosophical scheme of religion, formed by the human mind, to which the Word of the infinite God, however opposed, is forced to bend. As rational Christianity respects the *disposition*, it really denotes a decent, cold, heartless conformity to *this system*, without any visible regard, or pre-

tension, to the Evangelical character. All affection, all zeal, for the cause and kingdom of God, all concern of the heart in the interests and duties of Religion, are, so far as I have had opportunity to observe, not only laid aside, but disclaimed, opposed, and contemned.

Liberality, in modern language, denotes a general indifference to truth and righteousness; a general opposition to all that is awful in the Scriptural declarations, to all that is spiritual and heavenly in the divine doctrines and promises, and to all that is strict, exact, and just, in the meaning of Scriptural language, when construed according to the same rules, by which men interpret every other book. Modern liberality is charitable towards all errors, and all licentiousness, except that which is openly scandalous; and wonderfully uncharitable towards sound doctrines, and Evangelical virtue.

You my young friends, are yet in a great measure to learn, that very good names may be given to very bad persons and things; and very bad names to those which are very good. Of John the Baptist, it was extensively said, "He hath a devil;" of Christ, that *he was* "a gluttonous man, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." If, then, *they have called the master of the house Beelzebub; how much more must they be supposed to call them of his household? The disciple* ought certainly to think it *enough*, if, in this respect, he finds himself in no worse condition than *his Lord*. To you it is indispensable for your comfort, peace, and salvation, that you be not allured to error, and sin, by the flattering titles given to both; and that you be not terrified away from truth, and righteousness, by the hard names, profusely lavished on them. Burst the thin veil of words; and make your way directly to things. You will then find, and find with complete conviction, that he, who is styled a fanatic, an enthusiast, and a bigot, is often incomparably a wiser and a better man, than he, by whom he is thus styled; that no man is, ordinarily, more irrational, than the rational Christian; and that there is no greater bigot, than the man of professed liberality.

Be not, therefore, conformed to the world in the things, here mentioned; nor in any others, like them: *but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*. Aim in every thing at Evangelical

soundness in your doctrines, and at scrupulous, Evangelical exactness in your duty. Motives, countless in their number, and infinite in their moment, you cannot want, to force your compliance with these precepts. Among them, the superior ease, safety, and certainty, with which in this way you will perform your duty, ought never to be forgotten. It is impossible to be a half way Christian. Try as much, and as long, as you please, to serve God and Mammon; and you will find the trial fruitless. *To the one you will certainly hold, the other you will as certainly despise.* The bare supposition, that it may be safe, and proper, to change the tenor of the divine declarations, to lessen the demands of the divine precepts, or to lower the terms of acceptance with God, ought to terrify him, by whom it is admitted. A man may, I acknowledge, do this, and still be a Christian. But let all men remember, that *whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.* The straight course of truth and righteousness is a highway, *in which way-faring men, though fools, need not err.* A winding path is always seen to vary from the point, originally proposed. He, who wanders in it, will often be in doubt, and often perplexed, concerning his course; generally wearied, and frequently discouraged by its length; and not unfrequently hopeless of arriving at the place of his destination. At the same time, he will be in extreme danger of turning aside into a by-way, which, though seeming direct at first, will wind continually farther and farther and farther about, and will finally conduct him away from eternal life.

Whatever others may say, or do; to you there is, there can be, but *one thing needful.* It is, to *choose that good part, which shall never be taken from you.* All things else are dross and dirt: and, however desired by mankind, are unworthy of being compared with this, even for a moment. God has smiled upon you from the dawn of your being. He has given you your birth in a Christian land. He has educated you in knowledge and understanding. He has *called you to wisdom, and glory, and virtue.* Let not these blessings be given to you in vain. Receive them with unceasing and unspeakable gratitude. Employ them to the inestimable purpose, for which they were given by your divine Be-

nefactor. Remember, that each of you has a soul to be saved, or to be lost; that the world, that the universe, weighed against it, is *the small dust of the balance*; that the Son of God died, to purchase for you salvation; that the Spirit of God waits with infinite kindness, to renew you unto eternal life; that heaven has opened its doors to receive you into its delightful mansions; that *all things are ready*; that *the Spirit and the bride say* to each of you, "Come, and take the water of life freely;" and that it will be a transporting, a rapturous, sight, to behold all of you, without one missing, assembled in the kingdom of the blessed. But to this end, you must resolve *not to be conformed to this world*. *If any man love the world*; remember, that *the love of the Father is not in him*. Boldly, therefore, meet its frowns; and steadily despise its smiles. Disregard alike its hard and its soft names, its flatteries and its censures. Resolutely and invariably, reject its loose doctrines; and abhor its licentious practices. It may be more pleasant, but it will not in the end be more profitable, to go decently to perdition, than to go scandalously. It is your business to do neither. Heaven is your proper home. Point your course to that glorious and happy world; and let every step, which you take here, advance you towards immortal life. Let angels behold your progress, and rejoice over your repentance; and the spirits of the just prepare to welcome you to their divine assembly.

SERMON XXIV.

ON THE PARENTAL CHARACTER OF GOD.

PREACHED TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE BACCALAUREATE
IN 1809.

EPHESIANS V. 1.

Be ye, therefore, followers of God, as dear Children.

THERE is probably no scene in the present world, which presents a more interesting prospect to the eye, or which is usually described in terms of more ardour and animation, than a well regulated family.

The natural Relations come more easily, uniformly, and directly, to the heart, than any other: and among these the domestic relations excite peculiar interest. There is nothing in this world, which is so venerable, as the character of parents; nothing so intimate and endearing, as the relation of husband and wife; nothing so tender as that of children; nothing so lovely as those of brothers and sisters. The little circle is made one by a single interest, and by a singular union of affections.

Children are born with a thousand circumstances of endearment. The anxiety and distress, with which the dawn of their being is attended, make them objects of peculiar tenderness from their birth. They are then absolutely helpless; and live only on the care of others. Every moment, both when awake and when asleep, they demand of their parents, with irresistible claims, the protecting hand, the watchful eye, and the ever attentive heart. If neglected, they suffer: if forgotten, they perish. How rarely are they forgotten: how rarely even in poverty, sickness, or profligacy; which, especially the last, so effectually harden the heart

against all objects, beside those of absolute selfishness. The very cares and toils, which are employed on them, only render them more beloved: and an ample reward is furnished for all the labour, expense, and suffering, undergone in their behalf, by their health, their safety, their comforts, and their smiles.

Infancy speedily terminates in childhood. At this period commences a new train of affectionate and unceasing efforts to form their minds to knowledge, virtue, and usefulness. While the care and expense, with which their daily wants are supplied, are continued, and increased; both are additionally demanded, to furnish those supplies, which are now become necessary for their minds. In this situation the parents become more amiable, and the children more interesting. Their minds, hitherto confined to the house, and the court-yard, are now, for the first time, permitted to wander abroad to the confines of that universe, in which they are ultimately to live, and act. By ten thousand successive cares and efforts, both of the parents, and of others employed by them, the children are taught, successively, the various kinds of knowledge, which will expand their views, and qualify them for business. At the same time, those useful habits of thinking and acting are begun, which will enable them to be beneficial to themselves and to their fellow-men. Gradually, as they advance in years, capacity, and strength, they are matured into the character and the hopes of adult age; are taught to think, judge, and act, for themselves; and are enabled to sustain the relations, and perform the duties, which may render them blessings to mankind.

To this end all the instructions which they receive, all the impressions made on their hearts, all the examples set before their eyes, and all the habits inwrought into their character; unitedly conspire. Of the innumerable efforts, made in their education, not one, unless radically unwise and mischievous, has probably been made in vain. How many have these efforts been; and of what indispensable importance to those for whom they were made? How amiable the character of parents in making them: how deserving of the love and the veneration of their children?

During this period also, the minds of children are opened to the knowledge of God; and to the truths and duties of the Religion, which he has taught mankind. Almost at the dawn of life they

learn the existence, character, presence, and agency, of this glorious and awful Being. From Him, they are informed, they have derived their existence, their continuance in life, their safety, their comforts, and their hopes. They are taught, as soon as they are capable of receiving the instruction, that the end, for which they were made, is to glorify him by faithfully obeying his pleasure; and that to him they are accountable for the manner, in which they employ their faculties, and their time. With these instructions they also learn, that they are sinful beings; that to save them from sin, and the misery, which it produces, and with which it is rewarded, the Son of God came into the world; published the glad tidings of salvation; lived a humble, suffering life; and died on the Cross. In consequence of the wonderful Mediation of this glorious Person, they behold the Gates of Heaven opened to evangelical faith, repentance, and holiness; and immortal life dawning anew upon this cloudy, melancholy world.

Inseparably intertwined with these inestimable precepts, all the duties which they owe to their Creator, their fellow-creatures, and themselves, are, by degrees, unfolded to their view, and impressed on their hearts, at the same time, they are fashioned with unceasing care, toil and tenderness, into a spirit of submission to parental government; and prepared by slowly imbibed habit for submission to all other authority, both human and divine. In this manner they are prevented from becoming savages; and, imperceptibly to themselves, are moulded into men. In this manner they are prepared to take their place and station in the universe; and to fill the sphere, destined to them by their Maker. In this manner they are fitted to live, and act, in obedience not to blind and furious passions, but to sober reason, enlightened conscience, and evangelical piety.

Thus the great task goes on; and, laborious as it is, goes on cheerfully; until it is completed; and the children are sent abroad into the world, to repeat the same exertions for their own offspring. On this occasion, the parents distribute to them, with a bountiful hand, a liberal share of their own earnings, during a life of industrious and frugal toil. But parental love stops not here. It goes with their children wherever they go; resides with them wherever they reside; rejoices when they rejoice; mourns when they

mourn ; and blends its hopes, and fears, and sufferings, with theirs. With life only does it expire : and its closing scenes are the dying bed and the grave.

In surveying such a family, how many interesting objects are presented to a considerate eye, and a susceptible heart ? The world furnishes not so delightful an image of tenderness, as maternal care, watching, sustaining, and cherishing, its beloved offspring. The world never beheld the human character in so lovely a form, as that of the smiling, prattling Infant, lisping its half formed thoughts and sweet affections, in the artless eloquence of nature ; and imitating every thing which it sees or hears, in a manner, wholly inimitable by others. Through the successive periods of childhood and youth the eye of an observer is not less interested by the sight of amiable, hopeful children, passing honourably through the several periods of Education ; imbibing useful knowledge ; forming useful habits ; interchanging daily their mutual offices of affection ; receiving daily blessings from their parents ; and retributing them with the delightful fruits of filial piety. At the parental board or at the fire-side, who, that has a heart, would not be richly gratified to behold the brothers and sisters of such a family looking round on each other with love ; and raising up to their parents, sitting at the head of the happy group, the eye of duty, gratitude, and veneration ? Who would not mingle in the tenderness, the complacency, the smiles, of the parents, while they beheld themselves revived in their children, and living in their persons, and their descendants, through succeeding generations ?

A still more interesting prospect is presented by the same family, assembled for their morning and evening devotions, and with one united voice calling down from Heaven blessings, in which every one is to share. Equally delightful is the sight of the same family, going to *the house of God in company* ; blending hearts and voices in the worship of the sanctuary ; assembling around the table of Christ, to celebrate the wonders of Redeeming Love ; realizing with transport, as well as with humility, their own united interest in the blessings, purchased by the death of the Son of God ; and edifying, and warming, the hearts of all around them with their fervent and undissembled piety.

There is no situation, in which such a family can be seen with-

out emotion, or without profit. I will, however, follow them only to one more. Even this family must leave the world. The parents highly as they are revered must die before their children, or follow them, beloved as they are, to the grave. With what emotions must *they* commit to the dust a father and a mother, to whom, under God, they owe all which they are, and all which they hope for in the future world. While they mourn the loss of these, the best of all, earthly friends, with the veneration and tenderness, begun in the affection of nature, and completed by evangelical virtue; how must their views be exalted, and their hearts warmed with rapture, while contemplating the flight of these friends to the regions of immortality, and hoping, and preparing, speedily to be reunited to them in the bonds of eternal love, and the possession of unfading joy.

To the view, which I have given of this subject, God himself has set his own seal; and furnished an abundant warrant for much more than I have said. He has formed the whole race of *Adam* into families; the first of which he planted in Paradise, to people the world with inhabitants, who should obey his pleasure, and be only amiable in his sight. After the apostasy he began, and has ever since continued, to select from among mankind all the penitent and virtuous, to be a peculiar people unto himself. This collection of the human race he has styled, throughout the Scriptures, his *sons and daughters*; his *children*; *the household of faith*; *the household of God*; *the family, which, both in Heaven and earth, is named after Christ*. Of this family he is pleased customarily to style himself *the FATHER*, throughout the Scriptures: a title, in this application of it infinitely venerable and endearing, and casting around even the Deity himself a peculiar and glorious lustre.

It cannot be an unprofitable employment, unless we choose to make it so, to examine the manner, in which the great Being who made the universe, is pleased to perform those offices of benevolence, which he has taught us naturally to expect from his assumption of this affectionate character.

The observations, which I shall make concerning this subject, although in most instances equally interesting to every person present, I shall, in form, address to the Youths, for whom this discourse is especially written. To you, my young friends, let me observe,

1st. *That God has given you your being.*

In this respect God is your Father in the highest possible sense. He created both your bodies and your minds. From this wonderful act, possible only to the Mind, which is itself Uncreated and Infinite, you are to date your existence, your enjoyments, and your hopes, throughout the endless progress of duration. The germ then was formed, which, it is to be hoped, will grow, and blossom, and bear fruit, in every period of eternity.

2dly. *He sustains you with a parental hand.*

All the means of your sustenance he created by the same power, wisdom, and goodness, which originated your existence. He gave existence both to the plants and the animals, which have supplied you with food and raiment, from your birth to the present hour. The former he raised to perfection by the mysterious nurture of the rain and sunshine: the latter he taught with instinctive wisdom to find the food and the safety, which his own hand had provided, and fitted them, in ways not less mysterious, to become the means of support, comfort, and even luxury, to you. The food by which you have been sustained, the raiment which has covered you, the very houses which have sheltered you, the beds in which you have slept, the fuel by which you have been warmed, as well as the glorious lights of heaven, by which you have been guided, equally, to your business and your enjoyments, and the earth, on which you dwell, the scene of all that business and those enjoyments; are, in the same manner, the works of his hands, and the gifts of his bounty to you.

All these blessings he has rendered doubly precious by causing them to flow to you through the hands of your parents. He gave you these parents; and furnished them with that singular and mysterious affection, which, commencing with your birth, has followed you through life, hitherto, by night and by day, in sickness and in health, with every act of tenderness and bounty, which your helpless years, your daily returning wants, your comfort or your future usefulness, could demand. Your enjoyments have all been sweetened by the hand, which immediately bestowed them. Thus he has not only given you the best things, but given them in the best manner.

3dly. *He has preserved you with parental care.*

Your own recollection will probably remind most of you of dangers, to which you have been exposed; diseases, by which you have been distressed; and near approaches to death, from which you have escaped. You cannot fail, also, to perceive, that in infancy and childhood your life was a continual scene of exposure, in which no eye could effectually watch over you, and no hand effectually preserve you, but his. Heedless, giddy, thoughtless of yourselves; why did you not then perish? Why did not your parents weep over your premature death? Why are they not now, at times, wandering themselves, and conducting their friends, to your untimely grave? Why are you not now agonized with the Cholic, or wasting with the consumption? Who, to double all your other blessings, has given, and preserved, to you, severally, that circle of friends, who sympathize with you in every sorrow, as well as in every joy; and love to multiply both pleasures and hopes around you; without whom the world would be a solitude, and your life a melancholy pilgrimage.

4thly. *He also has educated you with parental kindness.*

God has caused *the lines to fall to you in pleasant places, and has given you a goodly heritage.* You are born in a land of health and plenty; where, compared with most other countries, life is eminently secure, and the means of subsistence are singularly rich and abundant. Why were you not left to a life of mere sickness; and languishing in the poisonous forests of Terra Firma, or to famish amid the deserts of Greenland?

It is a land of peace. Not one of you has heard the confused noise of the battle of the Warrior, or seen with an eye of anguish garments rolled in blood. You sleep and wake, you walk and study, you pursue business and amusement, you worship and live, in regions of quiet and safety; where *there is none to molest, or make you afraid.* While the world beside trembles at the sound of the trumpet, and sighs and groans beneath the ravages of war; while the nations of Europe are visited by the Lord of Hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire; we behold our Jerusalem a quiet habitation; a tabernacle that shall not be taken down: not one of the stakes thereof has been, nor as we hope, shall be removed; nor any of the cords thereof broken. The Lord has hitherto been

our judge, our lawgiver, our king, and our Saviour To his overflowing goodness is it owing, that you and your companions are not chained together as Conscripts ; and driven in a herd to the field of battle, to butcher your fellow-men, rob them of their property, consume their habitations, with fire, hurry their wives and children to an untimely grave, and in the end leave your bones to whiten on the same waste of death. To the same goodness is it owing, that your parents are not now lamenting your fall by the sword of an enemy, *as one mourneth for an only son, and as one is in bitterness for a first-born.*

It is a land of knowledge. Here all persons are taught to read, from the cradle ; and thus have immediate access to the Word of God. They are qualified, also, for the various useful business of life ; and are furnished with information to such an extent, as to make thinking a source of continual pleasure, and to render them useful instructors of their children in the morning of life. You, with advantages greatly superior, have been trained up in the hall of learning and science ; and have had your minds enlarged with the knowledge, accumulating for ages by men, and the wisdom, sent down from heaven. Why were you not born on the burning sands of Caffraria ; your bodies parched by a blazing climate ; and your minds shrunk to the standard of animal perception ?

It is a land of freedom. Here you, and all others, may do every thing, which is right, with safety from molestation. Within this single limit, a limit which every man of worth prescribes of course to himself. your own pleasure is the only human law of your conduct. You might as easily have been born under the iron sceptre of despotism ; and, whenever you acted, spoke, or thought, might have trembled habitually through life, like a Chinese, at the apprehension of being observed, and disapproved, by some minion of power. All that endears life, and life itself, you might now have holden on the doubtful and terrible tenure of a tyrant's will. Why are *you* free, safe, and happy ; and *ninety-nine hundredths of your fellow-men* bowing their necks under the yoke, and sighing and groaning under the miseries, of political bondage ?

It is a land of Religion. Here the Gospel shines with meridian

lustre. The glad tidings of salvation are published in the streets ; and the influence of the Spirit of truth distils as the rain, and drops as the dew. Once a *wilderness*, it has become an *Eden* : a *desart* for forty centuries, it is now a *garden of God*. Instead of walking in this light of heaven, you might at the present moment have been groping in Heathen or Mohammedan midnight. Instead of listening to the sound of forgiving love, you might have been deafened by the shrieks of a bacchanal, or the howlings of a Powaw. Instead of being summoned to the mercy-seat, invited to the possession of immortal life, and welcomed to the gates of heaven, you might have been bound and filleted, butchered and smoking, on the altar of a Demon. This house of God might have been commuted for a pagoda, the bible for the responses of a Sybil, and *the cup of the Lord* for *the cup of Devils*. Why are you here, gathered by the command, and admitted to the presence, of JEHOVAH, for the divine purpose of obtaining a glorious immortality : and why are others, as good by nature as you, *perishing for lack of vision*?

All the blessings, alluded to under this head, are essentially made yours by that great providential act, which directed the place of your birth. From the moment, in which you were born, they have gathered around you, unsolicited ; and have forced themselves upon your acceptance. How wonderful, how affectionate, how divinely endeared, is that care of your Heavenly Father, by which they have been bestowed ?

5thly. *He has governed you, also, with the kindness of a parent.*

This indispensable office he has, to a great extent, executed by the agency of your earthly parents, and others, to whose superintendence you have been committed. It is impossible for you sufficiently to prize the value of this dispensation ; or the kindness, with which it has been administered by Him. Had you been left ungoverned, your dispositions would have assumed all the wildness, ferocity, gross indulgence, and sordid baseness, of the savage. Your habits would have been fixed irretrievably in the foulest sin ; and your conduct would have been only a series of black and bloody crimes. Powerfully to restrain you from these perpetrations, and efficaciously to withdraw you from this hopeless character, God has placed you in the hands of most af-

fectionate parents; and by the instrumentality of those parents in the hands of others also; who have checked your dangerous propensities, and prevented you from the commission of sin, with as much tenderness, and as little severity, as you yourselves could rationally wish. The proof of this is complete. Your propensities to evil are not even now sufficiently overcome. Still, much, very much, has been done for you, to this end. All this, also, has been kindly done. God, who has placed this incalculably important interest of yours in such affectionate hands, can never be made sufficiently the object of your gratitude.

At the same time, he has with infinite condescension and mercy been *immediately* employed in this interesting concern. In innumerable ways has he governed you by his own providence. By prosperity has he allured, and encouraged you; and by every stream of bounty has reminded you of himself, the perennial and inexhaustible fountain of all good. By adversity he has chastened, warned, and checked, you in the career of declension. By danger, sorrow, and sickness, he has solemnly reminded you of death; and admonished you to prepare for the judgment. Fear has warned you of an approaching retribution; hope pointed your eyes to the gates of immortality; sorrow proclaimed, that you were *pilgrims and strangers in this world*; and joy become in your minds a presentiment of the happiness, found only in the world to come.

The threatenings of his Word, also, have terrified you away from sin; and the invitations charmed you to obedience. The Spirit of Truth, at the same time, has with a secret, unperceived influence checked, day by day, your progress in iniquity; and with a *still small voice* divinely whispered in your minds, "Who-soever will, let him take the water of life freely." Conscience, also, he has made his agent in your own bosoms. To this divinely constituted monitor have you been indebted for safety in dangers, literally innumerable; from thoughts, purposes, and conduct, at which, had you indulged them, you would never have been able to look without dismay.

To this various controul of your heavenly Parent over your hearts and lives, are you *pre-eminently* to attribute your safety, in both, from all the evil, which you would otherwise have done,

and, *wholly*, the attainment of all the good, which you hopefully possess.

6thly. *He has provided for you with a parental hand a rich inheritance.*

It is hardly necessary for me to remind you, that Christians are declared in the Scriptures to be *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ to an inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away.* This inheritance is proffered to you; and if you cordially accept it, will be yours. How reasonable are the terms of attainment?

Even in the present world he has invited you to the enjoyment of blessings, without number, and above all price. He has offered you the pardon of your iniquities: a good, *for which if you were to give all that you possessed, and were in possession of the universe. it would be justly refused.* He has offered you the delightful consciousness of forgiven sin, as a perpetual inmate of your bosoms; as a serene, unclouded morning in the soul, the forerunner of an approaching perfect day. He has offered you that train of sweet affections and purposes, which spring spontaneously out of the heart, finally devoted to his service; the peace of a self-approving mind; the joy which is the divine creation of the Holy Ghost; and the *hope*, which, *entering into that within the veil*, anticipates the glory of heaven on this side of the grave. All these blessings, in their nature returning every day, and every hour, together with a multitude of others, he has proffered to your acceptance in the present world.

In the future periods of eternity he has provided for you, if you will accept them, life, which will never end; glory, which will never fade; and happiness, which will never decay. He proffers you his house; his kingdom; his everlasting love; his endless presence; and the eternal company, communion, and kind offices, of the first-born.

Such, summarily, is the manner, in which God has acted, and is now acting, the parent towards each of you. From the view, which has now been given of this subject, imperfect as it has been, I feel myself warranted to claim your attention to the following remarks.

1st. *How honourable to himself is the exhibition, which God has in this manner made of his character.*

I call upon you, and upon the audience around you, to turn your eyes back upon the scheme of thought, presented to you in this discourse, and upon the character, here unfolded of your Creator. Remember who the Being is, concerning whom these things have been said. That they are truly said you know; and can need no proof from me. Call to mind, that he made the earth, and its inhabitants; heaven, and the heaven of heavens, and all the host of them. The sun, the moon, the stars, the systems, which compose the universe, came into being at his word. With the same word he can call into existence an endless multitude of other worlds; and people them with innumerable millions of intelligent creatures, wiser, better, and more exalted, than you are, nay, than angels are; beings, who would find their whole happiness, employ all their powers, and spend their immortal life, in obeying his pleasure, and celebrating his praise. To him, therefore, it is impossible, that you should be necessary. It is impossible, that he should *be worshipped with your hands as though he needed any thing: seeing he giveth unto all life, and breath, and all things.* Why, then, has he formed you? Why from your birth has he surrounded you with blessings; and showered upon you the daily fruits of his parental love?

He has formed you, to become members of the glorious and happy family, which is named after Christ in the heavens and in the earth. Bring up to your view the nature, and destination, of this family. He has taught you, that it comprises a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, and tongues. All these, you will remember, he redeems to himself out of a world of sinners by the death of his beloved Son. Can you find any thing in the character of sinners, can you find any thing in your own character, to demand, to justify, or even to explain, such a sacrifice? Why was it made? What inducement could move the Author of the universe to send *his only begotten Son, his elect, in whom his soul delighted,* to die for you?

All the blessings, which have been recited, he has showered upon you, that he might persuade you voluntarily to enroll yourselves in this divine family. With a wakeful and watchful eye he

has guarded you in the cradle. With an affectionate hand he has conducted your heedless, tottering steps through the periods of childhood and youth, and led you up to manhood. The bounties of his providence have regularly descended on all your progress, to sustain and comfort you. The sun of righteousness has illumined all your path; and light, and love, dawning upon your infancy, have environed you to the present hour. The voice of the Spirit of Truth has daily invited you to assume the character, the name, the privileges, of the Sons of God. Think of the number and value of those privileges. Think what it is to have your sins forgiven, your souls renewed, and your title to heaven secured beyond defeat. Think what it is to become, unworthy as you know yourselves to be, children of JEHOVAH; and objects of his unceasing complacency, kindness, care, and protection; to be pitied by him in all your sorrows; to be chastened only for your own good; to be sustained, comforted, and relieved; to be secured from every snare, temptation, and sin; to be assured of a perpetual remembrance before his throne; to be advanced in virtue while you live, supported when you die, and beyond the grave conducted to heaven.

Through the medium of Revelation, a window in the dark mansion, which you now inhabit, opening to the regions of immortality, cast an intense and delightful survey over that happy world. Hither the whole family of the first-born have steadily directed their course, from the beginning of time. Here they will all be ultimately gathered. How divine the assembly! All of them *sons and daughters to the Lord Almighty!* Every one a pure, spotless mind, adorned with the image of God; an unsullied resemblance of Infinite excellence; beautiful and lovely to the Infinite eye, animated with unfading youth, and immortal energy; living only to bless and to be blessed; their views unclouded; their affections noble; their purposes vast; their enjoyments unmingled, and intense; and their prospects, glorious at first, changing from glory to glory throughout ages which cannot end. Pain here, and sorrow, and sighing, and disease, and death, find no entrance. The whole progress of their existence is only an endless succession of joy, flowing from their lips in an endless succession of praise. Such is the character, and such the destination, of the household of faith; and such the conduct of Him, who made the

heavens, towards the fallen, rebellious race of *Adam*; and particularly towards you. What can be conceived by you, equally glorious to the Author of your being?

2dly. *What immense value does this divine dispensation stamp upon the Scriptures?*

The Scriptures are the only means, by which this illustrious design is ultimately accomplished. Here the design is all portrayed; the means of accomplishing it are perfectly disclosed; the facts pertaining to it are completely ascertained; and the promises, which convey the blessings involved in it, are settled forever. God here directly exhibits himself in the peculiarly venerable and divine character, which has been the theme of this discourse. Here, and only here, he shows us the manner, in which he performs the interesting offices, connected with this most important Relation. Here, in a word, he permits, encourages, and requires, us to regard him, to pray to him, to love, reverence, and obey him, as *our Father, who is in Heaven*. Here alone he unfolds to us the prospect of a future residence in his house; an endless union to his family; and the immortal enjoyment of his presence, favour, and blessing.

How different are the views of our being, presented by the philosophy of man? The *ancients*, groping by the light of nature after God, in some instances doubted, and in some denied, his existence; and in all denied, or mutilated, his perfect character; without which, it would seem, he could exist to no valuable end. Whole classes of philosophers, existing through several ages, and several countries, were either sceptics, or atheists. Others taught, that he was material; that he was fire; a mixture of water and fire; a combination of the four elements; or a Soul, inhabiting and animating the world, as the soul of man, the body. A great multitude of these men denied his providence altogether; and thus cut off all connection between Man and his Maker. The good, which belongs to the mind, they all challenged to *themselves*, and denied to *Him*. At the same time, they multiplied Gods without number; and attributed to them every human frailty, passion, and crime. Of such grovelling and impure Deities how heedless, base, and polluted, must be the worshippers; and how senseless, gross, and brutal, the worship. Such beings could never become the objects of rational views, elevated affections, or

virtuous obedience. Nothing of a refined nature existed, or could exist, in the Religion of the Heathen. Their piety was a mere name: their morality, except where it was the result of a penal law, was, even at its highest elevation, a *patriotism*, exactly resembling the preference, which an ox gives to his own pasture; a *heroism*, employed only in butchery, and plunder; a *philosophy*, pampering itself on the pride of talents, and evaporating in the utterance of paradoxes.

The views of these men never extended beyond the sensible horizon. A great part of them believed the soul to be material and mortal. Others conjectured, hoped, and dreamed, that it might survive the body, but it was only a conjecture, a hope, a dream. Beyond the dust of the tomb, and the ashes of the urn, they saw nothing remaining of man. They looked into the grave; and beheld it dark, and cheerless; a prison with walls which permitted no escape; without a window to admit a solitary ray of light, or to give the eye a glimpse of the regions which lay beyond.

Concerning all these subjects the efforts of modern philosophy have been equally vain and useless. *Hobbes* taught, that *that, which is not matter, is nothing*; *Chubb*, that *God does not interpose in the affairs of this world at all*; *Hume*, that *there are no solid arguments to prove his existence, and no reason to believe, that the universe proceeded from a cause*; and *Lord Bolingbroke*, that *God concerns not himself in the affairs of the world at all, and that it is more natural to believe many Gods than one*. *Voltaire* thought, that *God is finite*; and *Toland*, that *the world is God*. A great part of these men believed the soul to be material and mortal. The morality, which they have taught, is of exactly the same general nature with that, which was uttered by the ancients. But it has been taught with less sobriety, less sincerity, less conviction; and with an efficacy, not a whit more desirable, either on their own minds, or the minds of others.

Of the future world they knew, and they have taught, no more than their predecessors. *The light of heaven has, indeed, shined into their darkness; but their darkness comprehended it not*. After all their efforts, they have pronounced *death to be an eternal sleep*; and have quietly consigned man to the regions of annihilation; that *land of darkness, as darkness itself; where there is no order, and where the light is as darkness*.

To feel the true import of this doctrine, go to the grave of a virtuous youth, a child of piety and hope, snatched from the embrace of parental tenderness ; and address to the weeping parents, while they are committing the beloved remains to the dust, the consolations which it furnishes. Say to them, " Dry, my unhappy friends, dry up your useless tears. Lament no more. Remember no more the fate of your beloved offspring. *Lovely and pleasant* as he was *in his life*, you could not expect him to escape the doom of all living. Death is the lot of our race. Born of the dust, to the dust we return. Originated from nothing, we again travel back to nothing. Him, it is true, you will see no more. You yourselves, also, will soon follow him to the same world of annihilation. How fruitless, then, is your sorrow ; and how unbecoming the character of rational beings the sorrow which is thus fruitless."

How would the heart of parental affection thrill with horror at the sound of this frosty consolation ; at these earthborn sentiments, springing from the soul of an animal, and uttered with decency, only over the carcase of a dog. How would the eye of virtuous sorrow alternately kindle with indignation, and brighten with the full assurance of Evangelical hope ? How would the voice of piety awake, and tremble with impassioned ardour, and triumphant faith, while it replied, " Miserable wretch ! formed to the *honour* of an intelligent and immortal being, but voluntarily *become like the beasts which perish*. Can these sentiments have sprung up in a *mind* ? these doctrines dwell where *reason* dwells ? these declarations proceed from the mouth of a *man* ? Can they have been addressed to *human beings* ? Can they, most of all, have been addressed to parents ; to parents mourning the death of a beloved child ? Can they have been pronounced over the grave, and at the threshold of eternity ? Away with these numbing, brutal consolations. Go, utter them in the stall, or in the kennel ; where only can be found a proper audience to receive them. Know, that the light of heaven has shined even into the grave ; and shown to desponding man a straight passage from this gloomy solitude to the world of glory. Know, unhappy man ; Faith with an eye divinely enlightened, beholds in undeceiving vision this deceased child, cleansed from every stain of earth and sin, already a pure, immortal spirit, acquitted, approv-

ed, and received to eternal joy. In the glorious mansions above we shall soon be reunited to him; and find him wiser, better, more lovely, and more happy, than our minds have conceived, or our wishes desired. We shall be reunited to him; but we shall be separated no more. The affection, wounded here, shall be healed beyond the grave. The hope, cherished here, shall there be lost in enjoyment, which flows forever at the right hand of God."

3dly. *These observations forcibly urge you to be followers of God, as dear children.*

It cannot, I trust it will not, be questioned by you, that to the glorious Being, who in all these things has acted the parent towards you, you are under the most delightful, as well as the most absolute, obligations to render every service in your power.

To follow any being is, as you well know, a voluntary act. The duty, here enjoined by the word, includes both *Obedience* and *Imitation*: kinds of conduct intimately connected in their nature, and inseparable in practice. Be it, then, the first object of your remembrance, that God has formed you to become members of the divine family, which I have described; and in all the endearing ways, which I have mentioned, has provided you with the best means, and presented you the strongest motives, for realizing this noble destination. He has taken you out of the mass, even of your own countrymen; has led you from the outer to the inner court of his temple; brought you to the door of the holy place; and admitted you to the foot of the mercy-seat. There he has invited you to ask and to receive, to seek and to find. He has proffered to you the atonement of his Son; the sanctification of his Spirit; the forgiveness of your sins; an eternal union to his family; and an eternal interest in his unchangeable love. These are the richest blessings even in his gift: blessings, greater than any tongue can express, or any mind, but His, conceive.

He has required you, by his commands, to assume the character of holiness, of evangelical virtue; and of this divine attribute has placed before your eyes, both in his Word and in his providence, his own infinitely glorious example. This character, the supreme ornament of moral existence; the supreme beauty of mind; the only real loveliness, the only real excellence, of an Intelligent being; is itself the first of blessings, and the foundation

of all other blessings. As its proper reward, he has annexed to it *glory, honour, and immortality*, in the future world. Of him, who has done all these things, I beseech you to *become followers, as dear children*.

To this end, you must not be merely decent, learned, polished, obliging, respected, and beloved, in the present life. You must become holy; evangelical believers; evangelical penitents; followers of the Lamb; trusting in his righteousness for salvation; and consecrating yourselves humbly and faithfully to the service of God. The Bible must be the rule of all your conduct; *the Author and Finisher of your faith*, your divine pattern; the glory of Jehovah, your end; and heaven your final home.

The only employment of God is to do good. Let this be *your* only employment also. I urge you not to the vulgar, coarse beneficence of gross, worldly minds; employed supremely to display their wealth, flatter their pride, and pamper their desire of reputation. I urge you to the sound uprightness, the unwarping sincerity, the warm, ever-active kindness of the Gospel; of a mind, purified by the grace of God, following him as an affectionate child, esteeming it *more blessed to give than to receive*; and finding an exalted reward in the happiness of others, and a sublime enjoyment in making them happy.

The human soul was originally stamped with the image of God; a resemblance of the Uncreated Mind, inexpressibly beautiful and lovely, and illumined with the sunshine of heaven. How melancholy, dark, and loathsome, was the impression which succeeded it: the figure *sin*; the inscription beneath it *death*. Let it be your intense labour to efface, and your daily supplication, that God would enable you to efface, this impression of turpitude and deformity, and to resume that image of glory and beauty, which you have lost; a resemblance to your Maker, which will be known on earth, and acknowledged hereafter in heaven.

You are now going abroad into a world of danger and sin. Temptations will arrest you; wealth will invite, power will captivate, splendour will dazzle, and pleasure will enchant you. By enemies you will be assaulted, circumvented, and ensnared. Friends may endanger you still more by a pleasing, but seductive, correspondence; and by an alluring, but mischievous, example.

You will be strongly solicited, both within and without, to settle down in a cold, heartless, self-deceiving decency of life; and will easily cheat yourselves into a belief, that this is Religion. You will easily persuade yourselves, that God will regard you with mercy; because you are not so guilty as others; and will naturally believe, that the character, with which you are so well pleased, will not be displeasing to Him. Fly this precipice: at the foot of it lies perdition.

But while you resolve to be yourselves followers of God, as dear children, and to lay up, not dross, but Gold seven times purified, as your treasure in the heavens; resolve, also, to promote, as much as in you lies, the same happy character in your fellow-men. Their souls, like yours, are immortal; and of a price, for which nothing can be weighed. In the cloudy sky, which at the present time envelopes this unhappy world, there is one bright opening; through which the sunbeams play with inexpressible beauty. The eye of hope fastens upon this little spot of glory; and foresees with transport the speedy dispersion of the gloom, and the approaching arrival of a Millennial day. Religion in many nations is cheerfully *lifting up her head*; and sees, with smiles of gratulation, her day of *redemption drawing nigh*. The prayers of all her children are now ascending on every wind of heaven, to supplicate the hastening of this divine consummation. Wise men, not only from the East, but also from the West, from the North, and from the South, are now presenting their treasures, as well as their adorations, at the feet of the Son of God. They are sending his word, in every language, to all the nations and kindreds of men. Faithful ministers *run to and fro* through the benighted corners of the world, and proclaim to the startled inhabitants, "Behold we bring you glad tidings of great joy: for unto you is born a Saviour in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord." The synagogue, the mosque, and the Pagoda, already begin to echo the angelic song, "Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth; and good will towards men."

This divine Spirit, this breath from heaven, has breathed upon your own land. The dead here awake. Skeletons here are clothed with flesh; stand upon their feet, as a great army; and inhale immortal life. Catch this divine influence yourselves;

and let its glorious efficacy be conspicuous in every part of your conduct. Unite your hearts and hands, with those of all good men in spreading Religion at home and abroad ; in enlarging the borders of the divine kingdom ; in multiplying salvation ; and in increasing the number of the first born.

You have long, and often, assembled in this house for the worship of God. You are now assembled in it for the last time. When this week is ended, you will meet together no more, on this side of the grave. But you will again be gathered before the last tribunal. How glorious, how transporting, will it then be to hear you all, with one united voice, say, " Lord, thou deliveredst unto us five talents : behold we have gained beside them five talents more ;" and to hear him reply, " Well done, good and faithful servants ! ye have been faithful over a few things : I will make you rulers over many things : enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

SERMON XXV.

JACOB'S VOW.

PREACHED TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE BACCALAUREATE
IN 1810.



GENESIS xxviii. 20—22.

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on;

So that I come again to my Futher's house in peace: then shall JEHOVAH be my God:

And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

THE story, of which these words are a part, is, in substance, the following.

Isaac, improperly attached to his eldest son *Esau*, because he ate of the venison, which he provided for him by hunting, directed him to go out into the field, and take venison, and make for him savoury meat, such as he loved; that he might eat, and bless him, before he himself should die. The blessing, which *Isaac* proposed to confer upon *Esau*, was the peculiar blessing, originally given by God to *Abraham*, and afterwards to *Isaac* himself. This blessing *Rebekah* knew was designed by the Author of it for *Jacob*: and she also knew, that in intending to confer it upon *Esau* *Isaac* was influenced, solely, by his doting

fondness for that son. Her own affection for *Jacob* was equally excessive; and induced her, in the pursuit of an object, in itself warrantable, to employ means, which cannot be vindicated. The co-operation of *Jacob* was indispensable to the success of her design. It was necessary to proceed with expedition; and no way suggested itself, which promised a favourable issue, except deceiving *Isaac*. The deception was therefore resolved on; and the authority and influence of a mother were employed to persuade a son to deceive his father, by telling him a known, palpable falsehood.

When we see moralists, and even Divines, of great distinction, vindicating the lawfulness of such deception, uttered on specified occasions; it cannot be thought strange, that, at a period, when there were no Scriptures, and when even moral philosophy had not begun to have a name, *Rebekah* should be satisfied concerning the rectitude of her conduct, in a case so pressing, and in the pursuit of an object directly approved by God himself.

Jacob, it would seem, had more scruples, as well as greater fears. *Rebekah*, however, silenced them all; and persuaded him to act the unworthy part, which her plot had assigned to him. Through their united fraud the blessing was obtained.

Esau, deeply wounded by the unworthiness and success of the imposition practised against him, determined to revenge the injury, as soon as *Isaac* should be dead, by taking away the life of his brother. *Rebekah*, alarmed for the safety of her favourite son, persuaded *Isaac* to send him away on a visit to her brother at *Padan-aram*. *Isaac* accordingly called *Jacob*, and blessed him anew; and sent him to *Laban*, in *Haran*, on the border of the *Euphrates*. *Jacob* immediately set out upon his journey. He had proceeded but a little distance, when, night having overtaken him in a certain place, he laid himself down to sleep. Here he dreamed, that a ladder rose from earth to Heaven, on which the Angels of God were ascending and descending. Above it stood JEHOVAH and said, "I am JEHOVAH, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. The land, whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth. And thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. And in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of

the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with thee ; and will keep thee in all places, whither thou goest ; and will bring thee again into this land : for I will not leave thee, until I have done that. of which I have spoken to thee." Astonished at this vision, *Jacob* rose early in the morning, and took the stone, that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar. and poured oil upon the top of it, as an offering to God. And he called the name of that place *Bethel* ; or *the house of God*. Having finished this religious service, he vowed the vow, recited in the text. It is introduced with the conditional observation, " If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on ; so that I come again to my father's house in peace." All this God had just before promised to do : and *Jacob* entertained not a doubt, that the promise would be fulfilled. It ought therefore to be rendered *as, since, or seeing that, or, in more modern English, because* God will be with me, and will keep me, therefore **JEHOVAH** shall be my God. Accordingly, the Hebrew particle here rendered *if*, has this meaning in a variety of places.

On this occasion, *Jacob* quitted his father's family, without any expectation of ever being a member of it again. In the common, colloquial English of this Country, *he was going to set up business for himself* ; and, like other young men, was thrown upon the world. Here he was to take his chance, or in better language his allotments, as they should be ordered by Providence ; and was to find health or sickness, riches, competence or poverty, reputation or disgrace, friends or enemies, a quiet or troublesome life, and, universally, prosperity or adversity ; as God should determine.

For reasons, which do not appear, *Isaac*, when he sent *Jacob* away, gave him no portion ; as *Abraham* had done to his sons by *Keturah*, when he sent them away. Although *Isaac* was a man of great wealth ; yet *Jacob* was dismissed with nothing. but a scrip, and a staff. This heir of a princely fortune set out upon a journey, in an important sense the journey of his life, alone ; on foot ; to go to a Country, several hundred miles distant, through an immense wilderness, inhabited by beasts of prey, and haunted by savages of a still fiercer and more dangerous nature. Here his lodging was the ground ; a stone his pillow ; and the sky his covering. The issue of his enterprise was, in the meantime, incapable

of being foreseen. Whether he should ever reach the end of it was absolutely uncertain. If he should, it was equally uncertain what reception he should find from his uncle, or what success he should meet with in his future life. It will not be questioned, that in these circumstances *Jacob* needed the protection and blessing of God; or that the vision, which he saw, was in the highest degree fitted to yield him consolation, and inspire him with hope.

Thus comforted, thus inspired. *Jacob* began his journey anew with fresh vigour of mind, and with those supporting expectations, which were excited and established by the cheering promises, announced in his vision. But before he commenced his progress he uttered the vow, recited in the text, and founded on these promises. This vow consists of three distinct parts:

“JEHOVAH shall be my God;”

“This stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house;”

“Of all, that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.”

The two last of these resolutions may be paraphrased in the following manner.

“I will regularly worship God in his house, and elsewhere, according to his commandment;” and

“I will consecrate the tenth of all my property to pious and charitable purposes.”

These resolutions of *Jacob* are undoubtedly the best, which were ever formed on a similar occasion; and a perfect pattern for all succeeding young men, when beginning to act for themselves, and commencing their own proper business for life. No subject of thought, no scheme of practice, can be more perfectly suited to such an occasion as the present. I persuade myself therefore, that this audience, particularly the youths, for whose instruction this discourse is especially intended, will readily accompany me with their solemn attention, while I attempt summarily

I. *To illustrate the Import of these Resolutions; and*

II. *To exhibit Reasons, why they should be adopted by all young men, at this period of life, and particularly by themselves.*

All the observations, made in this discourse, on both these sub-

jects, will be immediately addressed to those, for whose benefit, in a peculiar sense, they were written. Yet it is hoped, that others will find such an interest in them, as to make a profitable application of them to their own circumstances.

1. *I shall attempt summarily to illustrate the Import of these Resolutions.*

I have chosen to call the several parts of this vow *Resolutions*, rather than to consider them in the nature of distinct *vows*, particularly, because in the New Testament we are not, in the *appropriate sense*, required to make vows. They are no where forbidden; nor any where exhibited as unlawful. Whenever they are made; it is undoubtedly an indispensable duty exactly to perform them. Should any person consider the Christian Profession, or the assumption of the Christian Covenant, as a vow; I have no contention with him on that subject. That it is our duty to make this profession cannot be questioned by a believer in Divine Revelation; nor that the engagements, into which we then enter, are equally obligatory with those, made in vows, appropriately so styled. If these be considered as vows; they are to be excepted from the general remark, which I have made; as not being in the number of those, to which I referred. From making this profession, my young friends, nothing can excuse you. *Generally*, I should advise you to make resolutions, rather than vows. They will produce the same beneficial effects on your conduct: they will be safer: they will be less perplexing; and in all probability will furnish less reason for future anxiety and distress.

The first of Jacob's resolutions was that JEHOVAH should be his God.

To choose JEHOVAH, as our God, is to choose Him, as our Lawgiver and Ruler, whose pleasure we determine voluntarily, and universally, to obey; to choose Him, as the only Object of our worship, as the supreme Object of our love, reverence, and confidence; and to choose Him as our final portion and supreme good. It is, also, to make this choice, without any balancing; and without admitting any rival to Him in our affections, our worship, or our obedience.

You will see, from this explanation, that this resolution of *Jacob* completely involved those, which followed it. You will see,

that this was the stem, of which they were only the branches; the foundation, on which alone they were established.

The second of these resolutions was, that the place, which had been the scene of all these solemn transactions, should be to him the House of God: the place, where after his return, he would, so far as his circumstances should permit, employ himself regularly in the worship of his Divine Benefactor.

The third of these resolutions was a solemn determination to consecrate the tenth of all his substance to pious and benevolent purposes: such, as God had generally commanded; and such, as from time to time he might point out, as being agreeable to his pleasure. Jacob perfectly well knew, and has here expressed his full conviction, that the silver and the gold belonged to God; and that He gave them with a design, that they should be employed in his service. Equally well did he know, that Faith without works is dead; that his goodness, or kindness, could not extend to his Maker; that it could extend to his fellow-saints, and his fellow-men extensively; and that He, who giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord. We give our property to God, when we give it to those, to whom He requires us to give it. Inasmuch as ye have shewn kindness, saith the Final Judge, to one of the least of these my brethren; ye have shewn it unto me. From these observations it is evident, that in this vow Jacob consecrated himself, and all that he possessed, to the service of his Maker; chose Him for his portion; gave himself up as a child to God; and determined to employ, wholly, in his service himself, and all that was his.

Such were the resolutions, formed by this distinguished Patriarch, so peculiarly the object of the Divine favour, when he entered upon the business of life. You, my young Friends, are now in a situation, substantially the same with that of Jacob. You are now terminating your residence in the place of your education. Many of you may be considered as having already finished your residence in the place, so naturally and so eminently endeared to the human mind, the house of your Parents. The business of life lies immediately before you: an object always solemn; deeply interesting to man; engrossing intense thought; exciting strong emotions; involving extensively your hopes, and your happiness; controlling your usefulness to yourselves, and

to mankind ; and deeply affecting your prospects of immortal life beyond the grave. In such a situation you have an unquestionable claim to the best advice, and the most benevolent offices, of all those, to whom your interests are endeared. Let me solemnly recommend to you the Resolutions, formed by this great and good man, by exhibiting

II. *The following Reasons, why they should be adopted by all young men in the same situation, and particularly by yourselves.*

1. *You need the Guidance of God.*

“ We are of yesterday and know nothing,” said *Bildad* most truly, as well as forcibly, “ because our days upon earth are a shadow.” *Bildad*, however, was one of those, to whom *Elihu* referred, when he declared, “ I said, ‘ Days should speak, and the multitude of years should teach wisdom.’ ” At the same time, he was a man of profound and comprehensive understanding, and of very noble conceptions. If it was true, that *Job* and his three friends, the persons of whom he spoke, were of yesterday, and knew comparatively nothing ; if the men, who spoke the doctrines and sentiments, contained in the Book of *Job*, were of this character ; how emphatically must it be true of you. You have just entered upon the dawn of your being ; and just opened your eyes upon the light of wisdom. It is true, you have acquired knowledge in a considerable degree : a degree, exceeded, perhaps, by few youths at the same period of life. The mass of this knowledge, however, is not wisdom ; and, therefore, not the means of directing your conduct, or your interests. Your whole capacity for this purpose must be formed solely by your own experience, or the advice of others. That experience you have attained, however, very imperfectly. All your correspondence with the world, in which you are to live, and act, has been almost merely that of children ; and even this has been employed not about the serious concerns, the business, of life, but in amusement and pleasure. When you go out into the world, you will find almost every thing, which it contains, new, contradicting almost all your expectations, and violating almost every opinion, which you have hitherto formed. Scarcely would the scenes of an *Arabian tale* differ more from those, which your imaginations have promised. The business of life you will find accompanied

by innumerable difficulties, and followed by innumerable disappointments, of which you have not formed a conception. You yourselves will be exposed to temptations, sufferings, and sorrows, which already lurk on both sides of your way through life, and will spring upon you from their concealment, when *they* are least expected, and *you* are least prepared for the attack. Mankind, also, are far different beings from what you have hitherto mistrusted. You will find them more selfish, more insincere, more unreasonable, more unfeeling, than you now believe, or can be induced to believe. The doctrine of human corruption rarely finds admission into the very heart, in which it dwells, until the belief of it is compelled by the thorny evidence of painful facts; and you will be astonished at the sordid, base, oppressive treatment, which, more or less, you will be obliged to encounter. You have hitherto learned the world in *books*. The picture, let me inform you, resembles the original very little more, than the images, formed by children with coals and chalk, resemble the human face. The portrait is merely a rude outline. The features, with which it is to be filled up, can be drawn only by the hand of Experience.

Among the things, by which you will be most disappointed, and wounded, is the discordance between pretensions, and the real character; professions, and the conduct; promises, and the fulfilment of them. It will not be possible for you to realize, beforehand, how great this discordance is. You will naturally, nay, irresistibly, believe, that fair pretensions indicate a *fair* character, and that *high* pretensions are the sign of distinguished worth. Confident assertions you will suppose to spring from knowledge, or at least from conviction; and contemptuous arrogance, from superiority of understanding. A smile you will easily believe to flow from complacency; and professions of attachment and goodwill to be the offspring of genuine friendship. A promise will seem to you a bond: and on the day of payment you will expect to find it cancelled.

Let me solemnly remind you, that the world, into which you are going, is that very region of *thorns and briers*, which was announced in the sentence, originally passed on man; and that the inhabitants of it are the descendants of that apostate *Adam*, the

retribution of whose guilt was in the same sentence declared by his Maker. Let me warn you, that high pretensions are almost always made by men, so weak, or so corrupt, as to have no other means, beside this shallow, wretched artifice, of supporting any character at all; that confident assertions are made, only from a consciousness, that they are supported by no evidence; and that contempt and arrogance are the progeny of a gross heart, and a puny understanding. Let me persuade you, that fair professions, especially when sedulously and abundantly made, are merely a handsome mask, concealing a deformed countenance; and that promises are but too often a serene April morning, followed by a cloudy, cheerless day.

You may, you undoubtedly will, to a greater or less extent, obtain the advice of those, whom experience and wisdom have qualified to give advice. You will, I trust, find *friends*. I hope they will be wise and good men; able, and disposed, to advise you to that which will most promote your real interests. Such men there are even in this depraved world: and their number is not inconsiderable. Seek them out: and, when you have found them, receive their counsels with respect and gratitude.

But God has told you, and every man of this character will also tell you, that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;" not even in men of this respectable class. With the utmost assistance, therefore, which they will be able to lend, you will still need, and absolutely need, the guidance of Him, who is the Author of all wisdom; and who, if you ask him, will *give it liberally without upbraiding*.

2. *You need the Protection of God.*

The observations, made under the preceding head, clearly evince, that your life must be liable to many exposures, of many kinds. There are, however, many other evils, by which you are *now threatened*; and from some or other of which you can hardly fail *hereafter to suffer*. Even in this healthy climate you will always be exposed to sickness; pain; languor; the loss of energy, and consequently of effort; the loss of friends; and the sorrow which it will occasion. You *may* lose your limbs, your reason, or your life. You are always exposed to dangerous accidents; to frauds; to slander; and to the bitter sufferings, inflicted by

malice and envy. You may languish out old age in poverty, decrepitude, and disgrace. Temptations will arrest you from within, and from without. False friends, there is but too much reason to fear, will betray, evil examples corrupt, and evil communications seduce, you. Your own prejudices and passions may, at the same time, prove worse enemies to you still; may ensnare your opinions, and harden your hearts against the truth of God; may make you deaf to the calls of mercy, and shut you, finally, out of Heaven.

From these evils who can preserve, from these dangers who can deliver, you? Can your friends? Alas! they are frail, sinful, perishing creatures, like yourselves. They, as well as you, are exposed daily to sickness, and sorrow, and death. Temptations have equal power over them also. Often they will yield, and fall; and thus become miserable examples of sin to you. Nay, there is but too much reason to fear, that, in some instances, they will themselves become the tempters; and countenance, encourage, and even persuade, you to commit iniquity. Their doctrines will sometimes be false and pernicious; their example seductive; and they will wish to have you their companions, and supporters, in sin. When they do not, they will cast an indulgent eye over your own passions, and practices; and, instead of checking you, when you most need to be checked, in the career of guilt, will by their false tenderness, and censurable compliances with your inclinations, insensibly help you forward towards ruin.

At the best, they will, to a great degree, be absent from you; incapable of knowing, or, if they know, of relieving, your distresses, rescuing you from dangers, restoring you from sickness, or preserving you from death. Their advice, however wise and good they may be, will be that of ignorant, erring men: a collection of mere opinions, where you will need knowledge; and often a mass of errors, where your circumstances will indispensably demand truth. Their example also will at the best be imperfect; sometimes alluring you to evil; often perplexing; awakening doubt and fear in your minds; and sometimes, perhaps, even staggering your charity.

But, if your friends must fail of furnishing you with the necessary assistance, where will you be able to find it? How obvious-

ly, how indispensably, do you need a Guardian, present at all times, and in all places; of sufficient discernment to know all your wants, dangers, and sufferings; and of sufficient power and goodness to supply, protect, and relieve you. But this Guardian, I need not tell you, must be God.

3. *You need the Blessing of God.*

By the blessing of God I intend, here, *that benevolent, and controlling, agency of the Universal Ruler, which enables us to form useful designs, and orders the events of his providence in such a manner, as to give them success.* From Him only can you derive the ability to form such designs: for "He giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding." When your designs are formed; how skilfully, how wisely, soever they may be formed, you cannot make them successful. The husbandman may cultivate his fields with the highest care, and skill: yet the rains may dissolve, the drought wither, the mildew corrupt, the blast shrivel, or insects consume, the fruit of all his labour. The merchant may fit out, and man, his ship with the utmost human prudence: yet a leak, or a tempest, may sink it in the ocean. *Except the Lord build the house, the workmen, however skilful, will labour in vain. In vain will the watchmen wake if the Lord refuse to keep the city.* The whole experience of man, the experience of every day, declares with irresistible evidence, that "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill." In the transactions of every day, and particularly in those of any importance, a considerate man will regularly perceive, that between the formation of a plan, and its issue, there is an uncertainty, which it is beyond his power to settle; depending on causes, which he cannot control. On this ground, all such men, instead of saying, "We know," uniformly say, "We hope," or, at the utmost, "We believe," the design will terminate well. Men, who adopt confident language on such occasions, are by common sense pronounced to be rash and thoughtless. "Go to now," said *St. James*, "ye, who say, 'To-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain;' whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. Ye ought, therefore, to say, 'If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that.'"

How pre-eminently do *you*, particularly, need this blessing of God? You are in the morning of your existence; and are, now, only preparing to enter upon the business of the day. In a great measure you are unpossessed of those advantages, to which alone even the sanguine men of this world look for success. To a great extent, you are without the property, the experience, the skill, the friends the influence, or the reputation, which many others possess; and which may hereafter be possessed by you. Your need of the Divine blessing is written in sun beams; and must be seen at every step of your progress. All the confidence, which your companionship, your numbers, and your comparative importance in this Seminary, have given you, will in a few days vanish. You will be scattered in the great world; will be alone; will have to begin a new character, a new employment, and a new influence; will find yourselves lost in an immense multitude; every one of whom will be occupied by his own concerns, and almost every one regardless of yours. Many anxious, some desponding, and perhaps even some despairing, thoughts will then arise in your minds. From this situation you may learn, at least, one invaluable lesson; and feel with strong practical conviction, that you indispensably need the blessing of God.

4. *You need the Mercy of God.*

“Forlorn,” says Dr. Beattie very beautifully,

“Forlorn in this bleak wilderness below,
Ah! what were man, should Heaven refuse to hear?”

You, like the rest of the race of *Adam*, are by nature children of wrath; being children of disobedience, even as others. The heart of man is pronounced by his Maker to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. I hope you will not believe me unkind, when I say, that *your* hearts partake of the common nature, and the common guilt. Look back upon your lives; and survey what you have done, and what you have left undone. Look with integrity and candour. Let each of you, then, in his own secret thoughts solemnly declare to his Maker the result of his investigation. Must not the language, which each would instinctively use, be the same with that, which was anciently adopted by one of the wisest and best men, ever seen in the present world: “Oh Jeho-

vah! the great and dreadful God! keeping the covenant, and mercy, to them that love Him, and them that keep his commandments. I have sinned, and committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments. Neither have I hearkened unto thy servants, who spake in thy name to all the people of the land. O Lord! righteousness belongeth unto thee; but unto me confusion of face, because I have sinned against thee." Would you not rejoice to add, "To the Lord, our God, belong mercies and forgivenesses; although we have rebelled against him?"

If you are at a loss concerning the character, which is the subject of these observations; it is that, which prevents, or disturbs, the peace of your own minds; which makes you reluctant to look into the recesses of your hearts; which makes conscience an uncomfortable resident in your bosoms; which makes you unwilling to think upon your Maker; which clothes death in a formidable array of terrors; which forces you to tremble at the approaching Judgment; and which compels you to shudder and shrink, when your minds wander into the regions of Eternity. It is the spirit, which awakens all the uneasiness, unkindness, and contention, around you; which slanders the character of its neighbour at the fire-side, and profanes the name of God in the street; which in the Hall of Justice engenders the furious law-suit, and brings the prisoner, blackened with crimes, to receive the sentence of condemnation. It is the spirit, which, throughout this great world, has called forth the post, the pillory, and the stocks; which has heaved the massy walls, and grated the gloomy windows, of the Jail; which has forged the chains of the culprit, and reared up the gibbet as the instrument of terror and death. It is the spirit of fraud and falsehood in private life; of remorseless ambition, gross intrigue, peculation, plunder, and tyranny, in Courts and Legislatures. It is the spirit, which summons armies to the field; wades through human blood; exults over the groans of the dying, and the corpses of the dead: consumes with fire the habitations of men, and the temples of God; and chases back peace and virtue, happiness and hope, to their native Heaven.

It is not, indeed, always seen in these terrible forms. Opportunities are not always furnished to permit, nor means to accom-

plish, nor talents to contrive, nor energy to execute, mischiefs of so dreadful a magnitude. The evil, whence some or other of them spring, still rankles. however, in every bosom. In the sight of Him, *before whom the heavens are unclean, and whose angels are charged with folly*, every virtuous child of *Adam* will always find reason to exclaim, *How much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh in iniquity like water?*

It is impossible, that beings, in whom such a spirit exists, in whatever degree it may exist, should not need mercy from Him, *who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look on iniquity*. You need the mercy of God, to convince you that you are sinners. Not a child of *Adam* has ever learned this humiliating truth in the manner, in which every one needs to learn it, from any other source. Every human being, when reflecting on his moral condition, says instinctively, *I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing*: never dreaming, deluded and unfortunate creature! *that he is poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and in want of all things*. The knowledge of our guilt is the basis, on which only our reformation can be erected. *He, who is whole* in his own belief, our Saviour has taught us, will never feel the necessity either of a Physician, or a cure.

From the mercy of God you must derive all your safety from temptation; all your strength to resist it; all the checks of conscience; all your restraints from sin; all your resolutions and efforts of obedience. From the mercy of God you need the daily prolongation of your lives, and the continuance of your manifold blessings. Can any of you assign a reason, satisfactory even to himself, why he is here, surrounded with comforts, and animated with hopes? Can a reason be assigned, why he is not roaming for prey in an Arabian desert; or prowling for slaughter, and for scalps, in the western wilderness? Why, let me ask for you, are you not now begging alms at the door of pride and insolence; deprived of sight, and led by a guide from house to house, to save you from perishing with hunger and nakedness? Why are you not writhing with pain, scorched with fever, or wasting with hopeless decay? Why are you not deprived of your reason, and shut up from the society of men in a dungeon of darkness and despair?

Why are you not already numbered with the dead, mouldering in the grave, and gone to your final trial? Why are you here; in the house of God; before the mercy-seat; candidates for eternal life; at the foot of the cross; listening to the sound of Redeeming and forgiving love; and hearing the Voice, at which all heaven trembles with rapture; "I love them, that love me; and those, who seek me early, shall find me?"

To all these questions there is but one answer: "Because, so it seemed good to the mercy of God."

From the mercy of God you must derive the renovation of your Souls, if they are ever renewed; and, if they are not, you *cannot see the kingdom of God*. The Spirit of truth, of whom you must be *born again*, if you ever become *the sons of God*, communicates all his blessings, from mercy only. Without his influence, you will neither know, nor feel, your guilt nor your danger; will neither renounce your sins, nor be endued with that *holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*. Should, then, this glorious and benevolent Agent refuse to have mercy on you; what will become of you, here and hereafter? You will here be given up to *hardness of heart, and blindness of mind*; will have *eyes* indeed, but they *will not see*; *ears*, but they *will not hear*; and *hearts*, but they *will not understand*. Of course, you will *never be converted, nor healed*.

The time is hastening, when you will come to the bed of death. It cannot be far distant, at the utmost. It *may*, to some of you it probably *will* arrive much sooner than this period. Against some or other of your names the melancholy asterisk may make its appearance in the next triennial Catalogue. At this awful season, when your friends, your enjoyments, and even the world itself is retiring from you; when the pains of death are agonizing your hearts; while life is struggling in vain to keep its hold; while the soul is fluttering, and trembling, over its beloved tenement, and stretching its wings with terror and anguish for its final flight; where will you find consolation, peace, or hope? Your Physician will have spent his last medicine upon you. Your Minister, and perhaps yourselves also, will have uttered the last prayer for your recovery, and your friends wished, and wept, and supplicated, for the prolongation of your life, in vain. Lift now

the curtain, which conceals eternity from your view. Cast your eyes through the opening into that boundless vast; and tell me whether you discern, in all its regions, and among the endless millions of its inhabitants, a friend, an acquaintance, or even a stranger, who can prolong your life in *this* world, or who, unpermitted of God, can make your arrival in *that* safe, hopeful, peaceful, pleasant, and prosperous. *Not one of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him, that he should still live forever, and not see corruption. For the redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever.* When your bodies return to the dust, from which they were taken; your spirits will return, also, to God who gave them. They will return, to render their last account. *Every work will then be brought into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it has been good, or whether it has been evil.* Who then will be your advocate? Who, beneath the eye of stern justice, will appear to plead your cause? Where will you find a friend, a refuge, or a hope, but in the mercy of God?

Accompany me in your thoughts one step farther. There are two states of existence beyond the grave: a state of immortal enjoyment, and a state of endless woe. To one of these you will go from the Judgment. Realize, so far as you are able, the difference between these allotments. Realize the difference between spending eternity with a band of fiends, or surrounded by *the Church of the first-born, and the innumerable company of angels*; in the bliss of Heaven, or the miseries of hell. Without an interest in the mercy of God, think, I beseech you think, where, how, with whom, you will pass your future being.

With all these solemn and interesting things in your view, let me recall to your minds the affecting transaction in the text. In the same situation with yourselves, with all the necessities which I have here stated to be yours, *Jacob*, when he began the business of life, determined with supreme wisdom to provide for them all. In what manner did he make this provision? He chose **Jehovah** as his God; and consecrated himself and his services, to the pleasure and praise of his Creator.

The choice is perfect: the example is perfect. If the proof, already adduced, were insufficient; the most decisive evidence is furnished in the subsequent parts of the Sacred Volume. The

blessings innumerable, and invaluable, which were bestowed upon him ; the protection, which he received in this solitary and dangerous journey ; the prosperity, which attended his labours ; his preservation from enemies, famine, and death ; and the glorious things, done for his posterity, particularly in their sanctification and salvation ; and peculiarly the immensely glorious things, which are promised, and which will be performed, for them, after their restoration in the latter days ; are illustrious proofs, that the benefits of these resolutions may transcend the life and interests of him, by whom they are made ; may flow down the stream of time to the remotest generations ; and may enter, with them, the regions of eternity. On *Jacob* himself, and his everlasting welfare, the efficacy of these resolutions is wonderfully exhibited in the remarkable facts ; that the Messiah sprang from his loins ; that God was pleased to style him his servant, his chosen, *Israel*, a prince with God ; and to style Himself the God of *Jacob*, the Mighty One of *Jacob*, and the Holy One of *Israel* : and that to *sit down in the Kingdom of God with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob*, is appropriate language, used by Christ to denote the immortal blessings of Heaven. The effects of these resolutions were, therefore, immeasurable and eternal.

Confidently follow, then, this glorious example. Open your eyes on all your wants, and weaknesses, your exposures, temptations, and sins. Feel, that life and death, endless enjoyment and absolute ruin are now offered to your choice. Feel, that He, who was *not ashamed to be called the God of Jacob*, will be pleased to be your God ; that *he loves those, who love Him* ; that *those, who honour Him, He will honour* ; and that *those, who seek him early, will find him*. Remember, that all good is in His hands ; that He is the Fountain, whence every stream of enjoyment, tasted by the Intelligent Creation, has flowed from the beginning, and will flow forever. Remember, that he is the Sun of righteousness, which alone has illumined, and quickened, the Moral Universe, throughout all its immeasurable regions ; that *in his light* you will see *light*, and peace, and joy ; and that, where he shines not, all is darkness and solitude, misery and despair.

SERMON XXVI.

THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.

PREACHED TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE BACCALAUREATE
IN 1811.



MATTHEW X. 5.

These twelve Jesus sent forth.

THE Twelve, here spoken of, were the twelve Apostles of Christ, who were now sent out by their Master upon an extraordinary mission.

This Mission was obviously the commencement of their Ministry. It was an extraordinary commencement of an extraordinary business; a business, in many respects singular, in all wonderful; and demanding from mankind the strongest approbation, and the most intense gratitude. Such a subject cannot fail to claim the attention of every man, who feels an interest in Christianity; nor of being a profitable theme of our present meditation. In examining it I shall consider, briefly, *the Person by whom, and the Errand on which, the Apostles were sent; their Circumstances; their Character; and the Issue of their agency, as it respected both themselves, and their fellow-men.*

They were sent on this Mission by the Saviour of mankind. This glorious person, whose Name, with singular propriety and emphasis, is called *Wonderful*, appeared in this world in the humble character of a Jewish peasant. Yet in this character he uttered, from the stores of his own mind, wisdom, which no genius, learning, or science, has enabled any child of *Adam* to rival; exhibit-

ed virtue, compared with which the highest human excellence is a rush-light to the sun; and possessed powers, which disease and pain, life and death, the world and its elements, instantaneously obeyed.

Nor did he merely possess these powers himself: but was able to communicate them to others at his pleasure. On this very occasion he commissioned his Apostles *to heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out demons*. In the progress of their Ministry they performed all these wonderful works. Demons, diseases, and death, actually fled at their approach; and the soul, at their command, was arrested in its flight, and, returning back from the world of spirits, animated again the lifeless form, to which it had bidden a final farewell. At the same time, he endued them with an exact and comprehensive knowledge of the pleasure and providence of God; a knowledge, with which they were able, without error or defect, to teach mankind their duty, and place their feet in the path to immortal life. Views, which before were limited to their cottages and their nets, he expanded over the divine kingdom. Thoughts, which before crept upon the ground, he raised to heaven. To these endowments he added Virtue, in every form and degree, in which it was necessary to enable them to fulfil the duties of their Ministry; virtue, superior to the fear and the flattery of men, to the trials and the allurements of the world, to toil and discouragement, to danger and death.

By these communications he evinced, in a particular manner, his own superiority to all the Prophets, who had preceded him; and showed, that his powers were of a nature widely different from theirs. The messages, which they received, they faithfully delivered; the powers, with which they were endued, they exerted with the same fidelity, in accomplishing the specific purposes for which they were given. But he, while he executed the pleasure, and disclosed the will, of his Father, performed also his own will, and uttered his own pleasure: as he has taught us in this authoritative phraseology, "*I will: be thou clean.*" "*Verily, verily, I say unto you.*" But his peculiar character is still more forcibly exhibited, in his communication of inspiration, miraculous powers, and moral excellence, to others. The Prophets, who preceded him, communicated nothing. He not only conveyed all

these stupendous attributes as he pleased, while he continued in the world; but imparted them also, in the same voluntary manner, after he had ascended to heaven.

This singular authority is, in the most impressive and solemn manner, announced to us in the instructions. with which he regulated this Mission of the Apostles. After directing them to preach, to heal, and to perform other duties of their Ministry, he proceeds; "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city." And again: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father who is in heaven: But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven." And again: "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a Disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Who is this, that in this peremptory manner opens, and shuts, both heaven and hell; and disposes of immortal life, and eternal death, in his own name, and according to his own pleasure? *He* certainly, and *He* only, who has all these things in his power. *He*, who *has the keys of death, and of hell, and of heaven; who openeth, and no one shutteth, and who shutteth, and no one openeth; who is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.*

The Errand, on which the Apostles were sent, was, primarily, to preach the Gospel. Incidental to it, as means of evidencing their divine mission, and proving its benevolent tendency to mankind, was the performance of the several miraculous works which have been already mentioned. *These* were means of exalted beneficence to mankind in their earthly concerns: *that* was the instrument of a more glorious beneficence to their immortal interests. *These* rescued them from pain, sickness, and sorrow, and raised them to hope and comfort in the present life: *that* was the great means of delivering them from endless sorrow, and raising them to endless glory, in the life to come. *Both* were illustrious exhibitions of the spirit, with which *he* was animated, and of *their* fitness and readiness, to execute so honourable a commission.

The Circumstances of the Apostles were such. as apparently

disqualified them, wholly, for this extraordinary enterprise. *One* of them was a *Publican*; *four* of them were *fishermen*; and *all* of them were of the class of *peasants*. They were of course uneducated men; possessed of little property; having few friends; and those, like themselves, without weight or influence in the affairs of mankind. They were now to commence an opposition, which they were to carry on through life, against the vices, prejudices, and religion, of the Jews and Gentiles; and, of course, against their power, bigotry, rage, and persecution. What a conflict was this! How unequally matched were the combatants! How unequal in their numbers! Twelve men against a world. How unequal in their circumstances! Twelve *peasants*, poor, friendless, powerless and uneducated, commenced a controversy against all the wealth, power, and learning, of mankind; against the government, the arms, the philosophy, and the eloquence, of their own and every other country. How unequal were the weapons! This little band brought into the field of controversy their truth and arguments against the bigotry, the sophistry, the pride, the ambition, the voluptuousness, the furious passions and rank appetites, of their fellow-men; opposed patience, and meekness, to ferocity and persecution; and arrayed their miracles against the sceptre and the sword. Who, that saw them commence this strange enterprise, would not have expected to see them crushed in a moment? Who would not have pitied such a body of poor, ignorant, well-meaning men; dreaming of success in an undertaking, on which Nature, in all her course, had stamped discouragement and despair, and for which heaven itself had apparently made no effectual provision?

I have already mentioned, that the Errand, on which they were sent, was, primarily, *to preach the Gospel*. Of this preaching the immediate object was, to establish the Religion which the Gospel announced to the world, in the hearts of mankind; and to substitute it for the Judaism of their own, and the Heathenism of other, nations: a religion, simple; pure; prescribing to the faith of mankind nothing but exact truth, and to their inclinations, nothing but unmingled virtue; and thus warring upon the native depravity of man, and upon every inordinate as well as every guilty passion and appetite: a religion, which professed to assimilate

men to Angels, and in that foul cavern, the human heart, to light up the beauty and glory of heaven. This religion they went forth to substitute for systems of ceremonious worship, which fascinated with their splendour both the senses and the imagination; for creeds, which flattered human credulity, and were flexible to every touch of ignorance, prejudice, or vice; and for codes, which demanded no sacrifice of lust or sin, and yielded to every corrupt wish of a corrupted heart. What a wonderful object is here presented to a mind, versed in the history and character of man; and with what astonishment must such a mind see this object committed to such hands!

The Character of these men was of the same interesting nature with their Circumstances. They were, as I have observed, poor, uneducated peasants, without friends, power, or influence. Yet they were men of plain, strong sense; and had been trained, for several years, in moral and religious knowledge, under the ablest and best Teacher who has ever appeared below the sun; and to whom all men, learned, as well as unlearned, are indebted for every thing of importance, which they know in the moral system. To the instructions, directly received from this great Teacher of righteousness, he was pleased to add the sun-shine of Inspiration. "Let there be light," said the same voice, which originally *commanded the light to shine out of darkness*; and in the hearts and minds of these humble men there sprang up "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Under this illumination they uttered wisdom, by the side of which all the preceding and succeeding wisdom of this world is foolishness. The chair of religious instruction they assumed at once; and claimed to themselves the character of teachers and lawgivers to the human race. Unlike the Philosophers of antiquity, and the Infidels of modern times, they did not advise; they did not persuade; they did not recommend; but they dictated rules of faith, and prescribed laws of practice. Nor did they differ less from these men in another part of their character. Lofty as their pretensions were, and decisive as were their precepts, they claimed nothing to themselves. In this magnificent office, totally superior to any other, ever occupied by mere men; an office, which kings would have been proud to hold; they still retained all their

former modesty, and were more humble in their deportment, than even in their circumstances. Philosophical pride is proverbial. The Wise man, particularly, of the Stoics, was, notwithstanding his contemptible errors and abominable vices, perfect, both in his own opinion, and that of his sect; and in some respects equal, and in others superior, even to the gods. Immeasurably distant from this arrogance, the Apostles were humble, meek, modest, and gentle, as little children. Proclaiming, as they did, the terms on which the sins of all men shall be *remitted*, or *retained*, they gave the glory of all their endowments and attainments to their Master. Yet the greatest of monarchs, and men with whom monarchs can rarely sustain a comparison, have gloried in being registered among their followers.

Of the same extraordinary nature was *their Faith in God*. No other attribute of the human mind, but a cordial confidence in the Creator, could have induced these sober, quiet men, humble and modest as they were, to undertake an enterprise of this magnitude, obviously attended at every step by tremendous difficulties. They knew, and have proved to us that they knew, their own insufficiency; and on their own powers, whether single or combined, placed no reliance. But they also knew the power of their Master; and in innumerable instances had had ocular evidence, that He was able to control both the natural and the moral kingdoms, with a word, and to do whatever he pleased. Equally were they assured, that he was able to communicate to them whatever powers, and faithful to furnish them whatever assistance, might be necessary for the accomplishment of their undertaking. In him their confidence was, ordinarily, unlimited: and an unlimited confidence was indispensable, where such difficulties were to be overcome, and such efforts were to be made. With this spirit *Peter* boldly ventured to walk upon the billows, to meet his Master; and with the same spirit, less rash indeed, but equally vigorous, and incomparably more stable, both he, and his companions, when they went out on their great Errand, fearlessly trod their way during life, through the fiery ordeal of persecution. *The trial of their faith*, as it is beautifully expressed by one of their number, *being much more precious than of gold which perisheth.*

though it was tried with fire, was found unto glory, and honour, and praise, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

They were Honest; and with an integrity, which no heathen, nor Infidel, Philosopher ever possessed. They were honest to God; honest to their fellow-men; and honest to themselves. Their purposes were perfectly single; and never sinister. They sought neither fame, nor wealth, nor power, nor pleasure. Every wish they restricted to their duty; every aim they centred in the glory of God, and the good of their fellow-men. Their declarations, also, were equally free from the stains of falsehood, and the disgrace of sophistry. They were direct, they were exact. The glorious character of their Master they describe without a single commendation: the transcendent wickedness of his persecutors they recite without a single invective, and almost without a single censure. Their own faults and follies, they disclose without reluctance, without disguise, without palliation. They set out, professedly, to preach the Gospel of salvation to mankind, and to become means of eternal life to such as heard them. This object they pursued, till death interrupted their career. In their progress they met with innumerable persecutions; such as might be expected, only by the open, bitter enemies of the human race. When these sufferings arrested them in one city, they fled to another; keeping their great design unalterably in view, and only changing the theatre of their efforts. The story of these abuses they have left behind. It is a tale, told, not only without vehemence and hostility, but without emotion. A parallel to it the world cannot furnish. The facts are barely narrated; and the reader is left to form his own unbiassed judgment.

Nor were they less distinguished for *their Resolution*. Few attributes of the human mind have commanded more admiration than this; and yet few have commonly deserved less to be applauded. Whenever active courage adventures boldly into great dangers, and accomplishes great purposes, the world has ever been prone to admire without consideration, and to applaud without justice: not reflecting, that in this manner, and on the same grounds, both admiration and applause would be due to the exploits of the

bull dog, and the tiger. It is only when this attribute is under the control of conscience, and is enlisted in the service of God, and mankind; when danger is encountered firmly, for ends so valuable as to justify the exposure; not only when great efforts are made, but great good is attained; that courage is to be considered as a virtue, and the brave man to be esteemed honourable.

Such was the resolution of these extraordinary men. Their Master, in the directions, which he gave them on this occasion, warned them of the dangers, upon which they were entering: "Behold," said He, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Beware of men: for they will deliver you up to their Councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues: and ye shall be brought before Governors and kings, for my sake, for a testimony against them, and the Gentiles." Melancholy encouragements these to any enterprise; demanding invincible resolution even to commence it, and much more to accomplish it.

In the same manner he taught them to anticipate their sufferings after his death. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep, and lament; but the world shall rejoice. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." As they placed an implicit and unlimited confidence, both in the integrity and the foreknowledge of Christ, they went out upon this singular expedition, with an entire certainty of experiencing all the distresses which he had announced. "And now," saith *St. Paul*, "I go to Jerusalem, not knowing what things shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth, that in every city bonds, and afflictions, abide me." But with this conviction, this certainty of danger and suffering, both found every where, and extending through every period of their Ministry, they entered upon their great undertaking with the same coolness and serenity, the same undisturbed tenor of thought, with which we go to the ordinary business of life. The anticipated danger they met with an undaunted eye; the present suffering they encountered with unyielding energy. With this spirit they moved directly forward to meet, with this spirit they actually met, danger and difficulty, hatred and persecution, the prison, the stake, and the cross.

Nor were *their Patience and their Fortitude* less conspicuous.

They were not merely summoned to encounter, but to suffer, also, and endure. Hear the summary, which *St. Paul* gives of his own distresses. "Are they Ministers of Christ? I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one: thrice was I beaten with rods: once was I stoned: thrice I suffered shipwreck: a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often; in perils of waters; in perils of robbers; in perils by my own countrymen; in perils by the heathen; in perils in the city; in perils in the wilderness; in perils in the sea; in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness; in watchings often; in hunger and thirst; in fastings often; in cold and nakedness."

The manner, in which these extraordinary men bore and endured all this, may be learned most effectually from their own declarations. "None of these things," saith *St. Paul*, "move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

Perfectly accordant with these sentiments was their conduct: "And when they had called the Apostles," saith *St. Luke*, "and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the Council, rejoicing, that they were worthy to suffer shame for his name." Such was the spirit, which they every where discovered, and on every occasion. Illustrious copies of their Divine Master, they reflected, as mirrors, the glory of the Lord; and were changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. Like him, when they were reviled, they reviled not again; when they suffered, they threatened not; but committed themselves to Him, who judgeth righteously. Their patience extorted pity and esteem from their iron-hearted persecutors; and often converted to the faith of the Gospel those, on whom their arguments and miracles had been employed in vain. Their fortitude overcame the fury of their enemies; and forced even malice itself to admire and applaud. From the midst of

one suffering it enabled them with serenity to look forward to another; and to go with an unbending, as well as an undaunted mind, from trouble to trouble. With the supporting influence of this glorious disposition they smiled on the rack; ascended the cross in triumph; embraced the stake; and wafted their praises to heaven in the flames by which they were consumed.

Not less intense, not less honourable, was *their Benevolence*. That divine attribute, which seeketh not her own, was never so illustriously exhibited to the eye of man, except in the transcendent love of the Redeemer. Their good will was not the love of party: it was not attachment to a sect: it was not bigotry to a church: it was not prejudice in favour of a system. Free from every sinister purpose, renouncing every private end, and every private attachment, *to the Jews it became as a Jew, that it might gain the Jews; to them that were under the law, as under the law, that it might gain them that were under the law; to them that were without law, as without law, that it might gain them that were without law. To the weak it became as weak, that it might gain the weak.* In a word, *it became all things to all men, that it might by any means save some.* Animated by this celestial principle, these singular men left their home, their friends, their country, their earthly enjoyments, and their earthly hopes; and wandered through the world, to promote the salvation of their fellow-men. The Soul, next to God, was the object of their intense love; and his salvation, the exalted end of their labours. To raise mankind to heaven; to cluster them round the throne of God; to place them by the pure river of the water of life; and to procure them an unforbidden and eternal access to the Tree of Life; they laboured and suffered, lived and died.

But of all their virtues the consummation and the crown was *their Piety*. "God, whose I am, and whom I serve," was the motto of their lives. "Now," saith *St. Paul*, "unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour, and glory, forever and ever. Amen." This was the song of eternal praise, which they sung without ceasing on this side of the grave, as a prelude to that everlasting Hymn, in which they have long since united, with the innumerable company of Angels: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth

on the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever. Amen." In direct contrast to the state of wicked men, *God was in all their thoughts.* This great Being, equally awful and delightful, they kept alway before them; and fixed their eye, and directed their course, like the eagle, towards the glorious Luminary of the Universe. To please Him; to execute his will; to honour his name; to show forth his praise; and to persuade others to engage in the same celestial employment, throughout the progress of endless ages; was the combined and exalted end of all their efforts: an end supremely great, and wholly divine.

The Issue of this enterprise, as it respected mankind, is too well known to require a discussion. In spite of the bigotry, the sophistry, the eloquence, the avarice, the pride, the sensuality, the power, the malice, and the persecution, of the world, they converted half the human race, within its known limits. The nature, and extent, of this change in the character and circumstances of men may be advantageously understood from a bare contemplation of our own land. A few years since, it was an immense and gloomy desert. Through its wild and desolate forests the human wolf prowled for his prey; and wound the secret scout, to carry flames and butchery, into the habitation of his unsuspecting enemy. In its dark recesses the worshippers of devils clustered around the powaw, to propitiate the malignant Power, whom they regarded as the author of all evil. The worship was such, as became the fiend to whom it was directed; the retreats in which it was celebrated; and the beings by whom it was offered up: a monstrous compound of ignorance, folly, and sin; debasing the character of the worshipper below that of a beast, and changing it into the turpitude of a demon. Contrast these things with the present situation of the same land. To the dark abode of superstition has succeeded the house of God; to the Savage, the Christian; to the incantations of the powaw, the prayers of the Church; to the howl of frenzy, the song of heaven; to the fiend, *JEHOVAH.* Thousands of churches now echo to the praises of the divine Benefactor; ten thousands of schools now open the early mind to useful knowledge, and divine wisdom; families in vast multitudes now waft their morning and evening incense to the throne of God; where, a few years since, the name, the

Word, and the worship, of the Creator were unknown; the path to immortal life was untrodden; and no correspondence with heaven had ever been begun. Go back a few centuries farther; and our own ancestors were employed in worship, essentially the same with that of the American Savage; nay, a worship more senseless, more cruel, and more brutal. To the wonderful men, who have been the principal subject of this discourse, is this mighty transmutation, under God, wholly owing. *Their* alchemy has converted our stones into gold.

To themselves the issue was immensely glorious and happy. In the flames of persecution they ascended to heaven. There, accepted, purified, and made perfect, they surround the throne of God, arrayed in immortal glory. They were pre-eminently *wise*; and will therefore *shine as the brightness of the Firmament*. They *turned many to righteousness*; and are *stars* of the first magnitude, and supreme splendour, in the firmament of heaven. Their names are engraved for eternity on the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem: and, when they cast their eyes abroad over *the general assembly of the First-born*, they behold, and will forever behold, millions of immortal minds, who to them, under God, owe their admission to the world of life, to glory which knows no limit, and to transports which shall see no end.

From the summary account, which I have given of this singular subject, the mind is irresistibly led through a train of solemn and delightful reflections; and those, of high practical importance. But the present occasion compels me to pass by these interesting themes; and to address the considerations, which I propose to derive from the preceding part of this discourse, *to the Youths, for whom it was written*.

You, my young friends, are now bidding a final adieu to the place of your education. Permit me solemnly to remind you, that the same Redeemer, who sent out the Apostles, is now sending you abroad into the same world, for the same honourable purpose; viz. *to glorify your Creator, and to do good to your fellow-men*. You are not, indeed, commissioned as Apostles. You are not inspired. You are not invested with the power of working miracles. You are not employed to write in a sacred Volume the will of your Master; nor to set up his Church in the world.

But you are sent out, as rational beings, to perform the will, and honour the name, of your Maker; to do good to mankind with all your powers; to seek yourselves, and persuade others to seek, for eternal life. Notwithstanding all the circumstantial differences, therefore, *your* commission and *theirs*, your employment, your destination, is in substance the same. *They* were required to consecrate all their time, talents, and services, to God: so are *you*. *You*, no less than *they*, are required to become benefactors to mankind, to the utmost of your power. Some of you will probably preach the same Gospel: all of you, it is to be hoped, will cordially aid, in various ways, its progress among mankind, and lend your whole energy to widen its influence on the human soul. For the accomplishment of this purpose, if it is ever to be accomplished, it is indispensable, *that with mature deliberation, and the most solemn thought, you should propose it as the true and commanding object of all your plans and labours.* It is not enough, that you merely join with the throng in a loose and general acknowledgment, that this is your duty, or your interest. Few persons in this land would hesitate to make such an acknowledgment. By most of these, however, it is plainly made to no purpose. Their declarations are evidently among those good words, which cost nothing; and, pleasantly as they sound on the tongue, are disregarded in the life. In the business of the present world, whenever it is pursued in earnest, we universally, and seriously, propose the course which we intend to adopt, as a commanding object of our future efforts. We do not alight upon it by accident: we do not take it up as a thing of indifference, which we have some where met with: but we solemnly inquire for it, as a thing of great moment to our well-being; ponder it deeply; and then conclude in the best manner in our power. We count the cost; we calculate the consequences; and then form our final result. All this process is absolutely necessary in this supreme business of your lives.

When you have thus solemnly proposed to fulfil the great end of your being; it is equally indispensable, that, with a solemnity still higher, *you resolve to make this your Ultimate end.* The Apostles, like you, had their earthly concerns; which were as interesting to them, as yours can be to you. To these, however, they

bade a final adieu for the sake of following their Master. "Behold," said *St. Peter* to Christ, "we have left all things, and have followed thee." This absolute dereliction of earthly things became, in the existing circumstances, *their duty*. It cannot, in any ordinary case, become *yours*. But the spirit, which led them to it, must be found in *you*. Between God and the world there can be no balancing in the mind of him, who really intends to serve God. This resolution may be formed by you in your closets; but will be far more solemnly, and efficaciously, adopted in the Church, in the assumption of the Christian Covenant. The sum of all the engagements in this Covenant, is no other than a consecration of ourselves to the great end which I have urged you to propose, as the chief object of your lives. Some of you have already entered into these engagements. Permit me to hope, that the time is not distant, when every one of you will fulfil a duty so obviously indispensable; and, before the altar, will finally dedicate yourselves to the glory of your Creator, and to the good of mankind.

Enter upon this great business with the spirit of the Apostles. "I beseech you," said *St. Paul* to the *Cöinthian* Christians, "be ye followers of me, even as I am also of Christ." To you the Apostles are no less an authoritative example, than to the Christians, who are here mentioned. I have endeavoured to give you a summary account of their circumstances, and their character; and I persuade myself, that this account furnishes sufficient evidence, that to follow the Apostles, is to follow the Lord. Search the world, through the present and past ages; and you will find no children of Adam, who so evidently wore that likeness of God, which was lost by their progenitor; or exhibited the Divine image in a manner so little tarnished, or shining with such glory and beauty. But in truth, there will be no question in your minds concerning the excellence of the example. The only danger is, that it will seem too excellent; too distant from the usual attainments, even of the best Christians; to be proposed with any prospect of success, or imitated with resolution, or even with hope. Remember, that, the higher your standard of imitation is, the higher will be your attainments. You will, indeed, fall more short of reaching a distant, than a nearer, goal; but you will run

faster, and farther: the race will be more honourable; and the reward will be greater.

Assume, then, the spirit of these wonderful men. Assume their humility, their meekness, their modesty, their gentleness. Assume their faith, their integrity, their resolution. Assume their patience, their fortitude, their benevolence, and their piety.

All these virtues you will abundantly need. You are not, indeed, ushered into the world, so far as we can judge, to encounter the same perils, and the same sufferings, which awaited the Apostles. Still you will find ample occasion for the exercise of their virtues. *The lines have fallen to you in pleasant places; and you have a goodly heritage.* You are not, like them, called to the rack or the faggot, to confiscation or banishment, to the prison or the stocks, for your religion. You may enjoy your own property, your own friends, your own home, unmolested. Yet, even here, you will meet, if you are Christians indeed; if you are determined to glorify God, and promote the real good of your fellow-men; with sufficient opposition; more, perhaps, than you will find resolution to overcome. The times, in which your lot is cast, are ominous, alarming, hostile to the peace of mankind, and not less hostile to the religion of Christ. In Europe, where the great concerns of this world are principally controlled, Religion has, in a great measure, yielded, not to reason and argument; not chiefly to cunning and sophistry; but, supremely, to pride, lust, and avarice; to brutal licentiousness, and brutal force. The great have, there, extensively become putrid with moral corruption; and the small have caught the pestilential contagion, and been changed into a mass of dissolution and death. In the terror of arms, and the gloomy splendour of conquest, *the Moral ruin of man* has gone on almost unobserved. The thunder of war has deafened our ears, and the carnage of battle blinded our eyes, to a destruction more dreadful and more comprehensive. But the evil has reached ourselves; and made a progress, at which our ancestors would have trembled with astonishment and dismay. *Truth is wonderfully fallen in our streets.* The very word *duty*, which once, like a magical wand, silenced the tongue of impudence and impiety, is in a great measure lost out of the vocabulary of multitudes, or admitted, only to be made the object of contempt and

ridicule. *Religion*, which enters inseparably into all the concerns, and which God has directed to control all the conduct, of a moral agent, is now boldly declared by decent men, and even by some Ministers of the Gospel. *to have no connection with Politics.* Is a Politician, then, not accountable to his God? Must he not give an account of his political, as truly as of his private, conduct? Will he not be judged, and rewarded, according to this conduct? Is he not bound, equally with other men, whatever he does, *to do all to the glory of God?* Is it not even more indispensable to the safety of a community, that men in place and power should feel the full force of moral obligation, than that it should be felt by other men? Where has God bound a man, while in a private station, to be a Christian; and at the same time, licensed him, the moment he entered public life, to become an Infidel, and a profligate? Surely the men, who teach this doctrine, have forgotten their Bible; and, on this subject, renounced their reason also.

A multitude of other licentious opinions have also been boldly avowed, and sedulously propagated; and among them the pernicious doctrine, *that a man's opinions are of no consequence.* I inform you; and your own observation, if seriously employed, will give it the force of a maxim; that *no man is better than his opinions, taken together, testify; and that few men are so good.*

Religion cannot, in this land, be buried in a dungeon, or consumed at the stake; but Satan and his friends are not at a loss for other means to accomplish its destruction. Among these, licentious opinions are pre-eminently efficacious. They are the effluvia, which, like those from the plague, form an atmosphere of contagion around the corpse; and convey disease and death to all within their reach. A multitude of such opinions, at which our ancestors would have started with wonder and terror, are now uttered; and that by men, destitute of neither talents nor influence. They are not only learned by the ignorant and the vulgar, but are reiterated in circles of decency and politeness; make their appearance in the Hall of Legislation, and the Chair of Magistracy; and are multiplied, as well as avowed, in the Church. They have, therefore, acquired a considerable share of that influence, which, in a land of liberty, is attributed to *public opinion*: and

every licentious doctrine, which can claim this influence, is dangerous, of course, to the interests of Christianity.

I shall perhaps be told, to obviate the force of these remarks, that Religion has, within a few years, greatly revived and extended itself in this country. The assertion is undoubtedly true : and it is also true, that there are more persons of real piety in our land, than at almost any former period. Still it is equally true, that a great multitude of those, who are not pious, are licentious, both in principle and practice, in a manner and to a degree, of which former times furnish scarcely any example. It is also to be remembered, that our population has immensely increased ; that the number of those, who are unfriendly to the religion of the Gospel, has thus become prodigiously great ; that our commerce introduces us to the books, and our Government connects us with the persons, which have corrupted the world ; that pride and voluptuousness, the gangrene of that continent, have deeply affected us ; that those plain duties of morality, which even Savages hold sacred, are here, extensively disregarded ; and, in a word, that sense and sin are threatening to cut off our intercourse with heaven. To all these things it ought to be added, that other evils, which, if not more fatal, will be more felt ; evils so obvious as to fix every eye, and tremble on every tongue ; lower gloomily in the eastern skirt of the horizon ; and awfully predict the same punishment to our sins, which the Jews received from the hands of *Nebuchadnezzar*. “ I beheld the earth,” saith the Prophet *Jeremiah*, “ and lo ! it was without form, and void ; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and lo ! they trembled ; and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo ! there was no man ; and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld and lo ! the fruitful place was a wilderness ; and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and at his fierce anger. The daughter of Zion bewaileth herself, and spreadeth her hands saying, ‘ Woe is me now, for my soul is wearied because of murderers.’ ”

“ Beware,” said our Saviour to his Apostles, when he sent them abroad into the world, “ beware of men.” The reasons, which prove the importance of this direction, are abundantly exhibited in the observations which follow it. Men, he assured

them, would hate them; would load them with the most opprobrious names, and imputations; would deliver them up to the hostile powers of the world; would scourge them, persecute them, and finally kill them. And these things, it seems, they were to expect from the nearest connections in life. You will, probably, not be exposed to most of these evils: yet you will have the most abundant reason to beware of men. Men will corrupt you, so far as it is in their power, by their flattery; by their errors; by their sophistry; by their example; by their influence; at times, by the weight of their character; at other times, by their numbers; and at others, even by their kind offices. They will, also, spread before you the means of sin; and open to you the haunts of temptation; where wickedness is made easy, pleasant to the imagination, and safe from discovery; where the young are allured in by-ways to hell; and where, when they have once entered, the doors are closed upon them forever. By their numbers, also, their character, and their stations, men will awe you into vice; and terrify you by their obloquy, their contempt, and their ridicule. You have been often told, that *you may as well be out of the world, as out of the fashion*. Let me inform you, that *it is the fashion of this world to sin*.

You will naturally believe, and the belief will naturally chill and paralyze every noble effort, that *your labours can be of little consequence to the cause of Truth and Righteousness*. This is a subject, of which you cannot be proper judges. Who could have believed beforehand, that the Apostles would alter the whole state of this world through every succeeding period of its duration? nay, that they would change the face of heaven itself; and give a new aspect to the kingdom of God, and the dispensations of eternity? If you seriously labour to do good, the good will be done; it will be important; it will be eternal. It will improve your destiny, and that of others, forever.

To strengthen you to this divine purpose, let me again exhort you to keep before your eyes the example, which has been exhibited in this discourse. From this time, consecrate yourselves to the service of your Creator; and begin a course of beneficence, which shall extend through your lives. Mark the field of useful-

ness before you. How vast, how important, how noble, a scene of your labours! The country, in which you were born, and in which you will act, will, in a century, contain more millions than the Roman world. These will constitute one people; whose language, manners, science, Government, and Religion, will in substance be one. Its state of society must, within a little period, be determined. A little period will decide whether it shall be free, or enslaved; whether its inhabitants shall be enlightened with knowledge, or lost in ignorance; whether virtue shall reign here, or vice rage; whether those, who, here, leave the world, shall be victims of perdition, or heirs of endless life. It is the duty of all, who are now on the stage, to devote themselves; multitudes have actually devoted themselves; to the great business of preventing these mighty evils, and laying a solid foundation for this exalted good. But all these will soon be numbered with the dead. You, and others like you, must then take their places; and carry on the unfinished work. With your property, your efforts, and your prayers, you and your compeers must establish good order; sustain liberty; distribute justice; and ensure peace to those who come after you. You must send out Missionaries, and convey the Bible, every where; must raise up Churches, and diffuse salvation. You must divert the course of our unhappy race from the regions of woe, and turn their feet upward to the skies.

Think not, that you are incompetent to these mighty purposes. You will certainly be able to do all, that God requires at your hands. While you are ready to exclaim, with *St. Paul*, "Who is sufficient for these things?" answer, also, with him, "Our sufficiency is of God." While each of you says within himself, in the language of that great Apostle, "I am nothing;" let him also say, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." The aims of good men, here, have never been sufficiently high; their plans sufficiently vast; nor their resolution, nor even their hopes, sufficiently vigorous. The day is rapidly advancing; it is at hand; when wider schemes of beneficence will expand the mind, and a more fervent piety glow in the heart. Begin this exalted career. It is high time, that it was begun. It is high

time, that the powers of the soul were employed in advancing the virtue and happiness of a world ; and not in providing new hobby-horses for the despicable ambition of despicable individuals.

In your own course follow the wonderful men, whose character I have delineated. Their Master excepted, the sun never shone upon so glorious an object. The virtue of the Gospel, the spirit of heaven, was the energy of their minds : an energy immeasurably more glorious, and not less vigorous, than the pride and passion, which have burned, as a furnace, in the hearts of conquerors. No hero ever encountered such toils, or underwent such self-denial, for the laurel or the sceptre, as they, for the salvation of men. What dwarfs, what motes, are heroes at their side ! Conquerors have been mere beasts of prey. The Apostles assumed, with no unhappy resemblance, the employment of Angels. The same employment lies open to you. Let your spirit, your labours, your prayers, be like theirs ; and your success, though inferior, will be great, honourable, and delightful. You will go to the same world, whither they have gone ; and partake of their enjoyments, their glory, and their praise. Even here below, conscience will smile on every part of your progress, and spread peace and joy over the world within. To your parents the sight of your Evangelical labours will soften the pillow of a dying bed ; gild the darkness of the grave ; and add new lustre to the days of eternity. Your country, the church of God, and generations yet unborn, will rise up and call you blessed. The Redeemer himself will look with complacency on every step of your progress ; and, O how enrapturing the prospect ! will at the end of life receive you all into his own divine kingdom ; and make you companions, and friends, in the world of life, and heirs of *the glory, which he had with the Father before ever the world was.*

SERMON XXVII.

ON THE LOVE OF DISTINCTION.

PREACHED TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE BACCALAUREATE
IN 1814.



JOHN xii. 43.

For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

AMONG the persons, who from distant countries came up to the feast of the passover, during which our Saviour was betrayed and crucified, there were several Greeks; of that class of converts to the Jewish religion, called by the Rabbins *proselytes of righteousness*. These men, apparently influenced by piety blended with curiosity, desired to see Jesus. For this purpose they applied to Philip; Philip communicated their wishes to Andrew; and the two disciples, together, mentioned the subject to Christ. This was the first instance, in which such an application had been made to our Saviour by Gentiles; and may be considered as the first providential intimation of the accomplishment of that memorable prophecy; "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Our Saviour, comprehending the whole import of this most interesting prediction, appears to have been delighted with the dawn, which, he foresaw, would usher in so glorious a day. Accordingly, he began a strain of discourse, filled with thoughts of the highest moment, and springing from his contemplations on the future enlargement of his church among the nations of men. As he proceeded, his soul appears to have been wrought up to no

common degree of rapture; and broke out into this ejaculation, "Father, glorify thy name." In answer to this petition *there came a voice from heaven, saying*, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Astonished at so wonderful an event, a part of the assembly, being struck with terror by the awful nature of the sound, declared, that *it thundered*: while another part, less terrified, and perceiving that articulate sounds were uttered by the voice, insisted, that *an angel had spoken to our Saviour from heaven*.

Among the persons, who were present at these transactions, there were, it seems, many of the *chief rulers*; a considerable number of whom were so much affected by the scene, that *they believed on him*: i. e. they were convinced, that he was the Messiah. Still, *for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess him*; or, in other words, did not openly profess their faith in him as the Messiah, *lest they should be put out of the Synagogue*. The Sanhedrim was to a great extent composed, and at this time almost wholly under the influence, of the Pharisees. Under this influence it had not long before come to a solemn determination, *that if any man should confess Christ to be the Messiah, he should be cast out of the synagogue*; or, in other words, excommunicated. The dread of this punishment prevented these rulers from acknowledging their belief in the Redeemer. Excommunication among the Jews was followed by the loss of all the ecclesiastical privileges, which a Jew could claim as his birthright. At the same time it assured to the unfortunate subject the hatred and contempt of his nation: and this seems to have been the evil, principally dreaded by these rulers: so dreaded, that neither the wisdom and excellence of the Redeemer, nor the stupendous miracle, of which they had just been witnesses, could induce them to encounter it: "For," says the Evangelist, "they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

The spirit, by which these Rulers were governed in this conduct, was *the love of the approbation of their fellow-men*: a disposition, styled, at times, *the love of applause*; *the love of fame*; *ambition*; and *the love of glory*. By all this phraseology the same affection of the mind is indicated, with certain shades of difference, arising from some diversity in the objects, from which we

hope to derive it, or *in the methods*, in which it is pursued. The affection itself is, however, but one; and will be so considered in the present discourse. In these rulers this disposition was addressed, as it is, perhaps, in most other cases, in two modes: *the dread of losing the favourable opinion of their countrymen, especially of persons possessing superior influence: and the hope of retaining it*: and so powerfully was it addressed, that to secure this favourable opinion they were willing to forego the approbation of their Maker.

The youngest member of this audience scarcely needs to be told, that the feelings, which governed these Jewish rulers, characterize the whole race of Adam. No man is sufficiently elevated to rise above their influence; and no man sufficiently depressed to be beneath it. The ambition of kings and heroes, of philosophers and poets, has for ages been a proverbial topic of observation. It is unnecessary to search for it at the head of empires, or armies, or recur to profound wisdom, or brilliant talents. Men in private life, and of all descriptions, covet the good opinion of those around them as truly, as he, who challenges the homage of courts and nations; as he, who expects to inwreath his temples with a garland of amaranth, or to live through the succession of ages by the hand of the statuary; as he, who is conscious of soaring above the Aonian mount on the wing of Milton, or of unravelling with the hand of Newton the mysteries of nature. The farmer claims this distinction from the skill and success of his husbandry; the merchant, from the extension and prosperity of his commerce. The mechanic expects it from the niceness and superiority of his workmanship; and the manufacturer, from the ingenuity with which he abridges his labour, and the perfection which he gives to his fabrics. When we descend to the humblest stations of life; we see the same spirit no less prominent in those, by whom they are occupied. The common labourer, the seaman before the mast, the coachman, the groom, and the foot-boy, are as truly; and often as intensely, covetous of applause, as the statesman, or the hero. They feel equally well assured, that they have merited it; equally challenge it as their proper reward; and are no less uniformly governed by it as a motive. To take one set of examples more: men, distinguished for their

vices only, aim equally at acquiring distinction by these, as others by nobler kinds of conduct. The miser, odious to all men by his characteristical spirit, still intends to be, and feels strongly assured that he is, applauded, as well as envied, by others for his shrewdness in amassing money, and for the sums which he has actually amassed. The thief claims applause for the cunning, and the robber for the courage, with which he has plundered others of their property. The gambler holds it to be high distinction to game with skill; the liar, to impose with adroitness on the faith of his neighbours; and the drunkard, to taste wine more acutely than his companions. All these men, and all others, like them in character or station, aim at the applause of some circle, greater or less, of their fellow-men. All feel conscious of having deserved it in some manner or other by their conduct; and all are proud both of the desert, and the attainment. Should the extraordinary case happen, that any one of them should believe himself to have failed of his favourite object; he would, like the miser in Horace, console himself for the injustice, done to him, *by an ample tribute of self-flattery at his own fire-side*. To sum up this part of the discussion in a word; it is not improbable, that no child of Adam was ever so poor, so low in station, so ignorant, so profligate, or so absolutely destitute of character, as not to aim at the applause of others, and to feel assured that it was his due.

It is, however, to be carefully observed, that dispositions materially different are designated in the customary language of men by these names. What is intended by them is sometimes *the desire of Esteem*, and sometimes *the love of Admiration*.

The desire of esteem is, in its nature, capable of being just and vindicable. It may be, it often is, no other than the desire of being believed by others to have thought, and acted, well; to have done our duty; to have conformed to the dictates of conscience, and the Word of God. In this case, if confined within the limits, prescribed in the Sacred volume, it is virtuous. In that volume we are taught, that a good name is better than great riches, and loving favour, than silver and gold. A good name is nothing but *the character, testified of us by others, when they believe, that we have done our duty*: and such a testimony is by the voice of God declared to be *better than great riches*. Accordingly, it is

valued and sought, and the Scriptures intended, that it should be thus valued and sought, by good men. The esteem of the wise and virtuous, commonly followed by that of other men, is of more worth than we can easily calculate; and forms no small part of the happiness, found on this side of the grave. Nay, the esteem of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, will constitute an essential part of the enjoyments of heaven.

Rational esteem is given only to good qualities, displayed in good conduct. The sober desire of such esteem will therefore prompt him, in whom it exists, to the attainment, the increase, and the exhibition, of such qualities; or, in other words, will urge him to the acquisition of the best character.

But *the love of admiration* is a far more common attribute of the human mind; and, if I mistake not, *is never virtuous*. The praise, which we covet for our talents, accomplishments, wealth, splendour, power, or influence, is in every case, which I have been able to figure to myself, sinfully coveted. This is the very desire of distinction, which our first parents cherished in their apostasy. It is the ambition, which has disgraced, and afflicted, mankind from the beginning; under the efforts of which *the earth has groaned, and travailed in pain, together*, till the present hour. It is the spirit, which, to a vast extent, has goaded the usurper on to the throne, through treachery and blood; and spurred the hero to conflagration and slaughter. It is not always made the ultimate object; but is intended, in many instances, to subserve the purposes of other base and selfish affections; the acquisition of wealth, power, and pleasure.

No passion of the human mind *is stronger than this*. After it has been sufficiently indulged to become a habit, it engrosses all the energy of the soul; or, perhaps, more properly, becomes its whole energy; and converts all the faculties, and all the efforts, to its own purposes. In this case the soul is changed into a mere mass of ambition: and nothing in heaven, or in earth, is felt to possess the least value, except as it may be subservient to the dictates of this master passion. Alexander under its influence ravaged a world; and sighed, and wept, for another. In his steps has trodden every military madman down to the present hour: and in the same steps, before them all, walked Satan: the first

maniac, ever seen in the universe; when he disdained the high *estate*, to which he had been originally exalted, and left *his own habitation*; or, in other words, the magnificent station, assigned him by God; because it was not lofty enough to satisfy his desire of distinction. There is no excess, no length, to which this affection will not go. There is no authority of God or man, against which it will not rebel; no law, which it will not violate; no obligation, which it will not burst asunder; and no motive, furnished by time or eternity, by heaven or hell, which it will not overcome. Wickedness can in no other form become more intense; nor its plans more vast; nor its obstinacy more enduring; nor its ravages more extensive, or more dreadful.

It will not be wondered, that, with these views, a Minister of the Gospel should fervently endeavour to dissuade his own flock from the indulgence of a disposition, so violently opposed to the will of God, so hostile to the welfare of mankind, and so injurious to every interest of the possessor.

It may, however, it probably will, appear not a little strange to an assembly of youths, that a Minister of the Gospel should entertain these views. They have been so accustomed to hear from almost every voice, which they have ever heard, and to see in a great part of the books, which they have read, the love of distinction honoured by the imposing names of *a generous ambition, a laudable ambition, a noble emulation, an honest desire to excel*; together with many others of a similar nature; that they may be not a little surprized to find language so different, adopted concerning this subject on the present occasion. The true reason, why these imposing names have been so generally used, cannot be found in the nature of the subject. As this passion exists in the hearts of all men; as it is naturally the favourite passion in almost all; every man, who gives it soft appellations, is pleasantly employed, whether conscious of it or not, in justifying his own conduct, and panegyrising his own character. At the same time, the parent, the instructor, the friend, and with shame I must add, because it is true, sometimes even the Minister of the Gospel, realizing that this is the most influential and operative propensity of the heart, feels a kind of necessity of engaging it for those purposes, to which he would persuade others; and despairs, perhaps, of ef-

fectually engaging them by any other means. In this case, the teacher offers the incense of flattery both to himself and his pupil. In each, the heart is silly enough to relish the perfume: and deceitful enough to prevent the conscience from perceiving the immorality of the affections indulged, or of the means employed. All, in this case, have been pleased; and therefore willingly deceived.

Youths, who by their education are destined to fill important offices in the world, are peculiarly liable to become victims of this imposition. They incessantly hear all the changes rung, which the voice of man has been able to form concerning superiority of genius, talents, eloquence, learning, science, taste and criticism; and insensibly are fashioned into a belief, that these are the idols before which they may lawfully bow. Every one is also bolstered in this belief by the universal faith of his companions. Where the knees of all around him are already bent, it is no difficult thing for an individual to persuade himself, that the worship is vindicable.

It is, however, my design in this discourse, to convince *you*, my young friends, for whom it was especially written, and your companions, also, who are equally interested in the subject, that, notwithstanding all the splendour, with which this passion has been invested, it is opposed to the will of God, injurious to your fellow-men, and noxious to yourselves; and to dissuade you, as far as may be, from the indulgence of a disposition, absolutely malignant.

To accomplish this end, I shall adopt no other method, except placing before you plain truth. I shall not exaggerate. I shall not colour. I shall treat you fairly, and just as I wish you to treat yourselves.

I shall not, therefore, tell you, that *there is no pleasure, to be found in distinction.* If there were not; how could it be coveted by man? By what means could the passion for it have become so strong, as frequently to have set the world on fire, and to have converted its fairest portions into heaps of desolation. I well know, that the object is but too fascinating; that the pleasure, which it holds out, is but too intense for such minds as ours; that the gratifications, which it promises, swell the heart into ecstasy,

and bewilder it with delirium. I am aware, that the splendid examples of success, which at times are presented on the page of the historian and in the song of the poet, dazzle the eye with their glare; and overpower the minds, especially of youth, with their magnificence. At the same time, I know, that the light is not that of the sun, and shines not from heaven. It was kindled from hell: it is the blaze of conflagration, and ruin.

I will now suppose you to go out into the world under the full influence of the love of distinction, and with a fixed determination to pursue it as the commanding object of your lives. I will suppose you resolved to spend your days in acquiring admiration and applause; and, as means of this darling acquisition, to obtain suffrages, office, wealth, and power. What will be the consequences?

At the commencement of your career, remember, that *you enter the lists with the worst of mankind*; and those of every rank, from Cæsar and Napoleon to Erostratus and Chartres. By a part of this company your vanity will not be flattered. Remember, for it is true, that, however different the means are, which the several votaries of distinction adopt, the spirit is the same in them all.

Let me exhort you to remember, also, that *this spirit will regularly, and intensely, debase your character*. There is nothing noble, beside what is generous and disinterested; nothing beside that, in which others share, and in which good, in a greater or less degree expansive and public, is the commanding object. Selfishness is in its nature little and base. But no passion, and no pursuits, are more absolutely selfish than the love of distinction. One's self is here the sole object; and in this object all the labours, purposes, and wishes, terminate. The *natural affections*, to a considerable extent, resist the power and check the progress, of selfish propensities. Parents extend their views and efforts, to the good of their children; friends, to that of friends; and neighbours, to that of each other. Compassion sheds the blessings of kindness upon the suffering; and the love of country promotes extensively the public good. *The benevolence of the Gospel* lays the axe at the root of selfishness; and ultimately levels it with the ground. But the love of distinction by degrees exterminates the natural affections;

and closes the door of the heart against the benevolence of the Gospel. In this situation the man is left without a check, with the spirit of a reprobate, or a fiend. This object you, like others, will feel to be indispensable to your happiness. If it can be obtained by honest measures; you will prefer them: if not, you will have recourse to those which are dishonest. If it can be achieved by kindness, you will be kind: if not, you will resort to cruelty. If truth will secure it, you will speak truth: if not, you will utter falsehood. At first these measures will startle you. Soon they will become familiar; and then desirable. Engrossed by the superiority which you will ardently covet, the nature of the Means will be forgotten; and the End will soon be believed to sanction them all.

I say you will do this, merely because you possess the common nature of our race; and because such has been the ordinary career of those, who have given up themselves to this passion.

From men of superior minds we should naturally look for superior thoughts, exalted purposes, and noble conduct. Especially, when they were in stations of high eminence, and possessed of extensive means of doing good, we should almost irresistibly conclude, that their actions would be all dignified, and magnanimous. Look at facts: and how entirely reversed is the picture. The late Emperor of the French is universally acknowledged to possess a mind of uncommon vigour; and the height, to which he rose, was above the elevation of every other mortal. But what mind was ever more debased? Where were the same injustice, rapacity, fraud, falsehood and cruelty, ever combined in a single bosom? How many peasants, how many servants, would have disdained the measures, which he adopted without a blush? Who, to the eye of sober sense, was ever a more despicable wretch?

The same debasement follows this passion through every sphere of life. The candidate for office it prompts to cringe, and fawn, and lick the hand of him who has offices to give; to solicit suffrages in a manner, which would disgrace the beggar who craves of you a shilling; to belie the character of a rival; to promise the promotion of measures, which his conscience condemns; and universally to wade through all the mire and filth of caballing and

electioneering, to gain his purpose. Which of you can descend to this humiliation?

At the same time *this passion is incapable of being satisfied*. It is the *grave*, which, devouring its millions, is still open, to devour millions more. It is *the fire*, which, laying waste a world, is prepared, instead of saying, "It is enough," to kindle another. No man was ever more absolutely controlled by the love of superiority than Alexander. Heaven permitted him to gratify this propensity in a manner scarcely exemplified. He became not only the first man in the world, in power, greatness, and renown; but stood at an immeasurable distance from any rival. Yet he was far less satisfied than when he was only king of Macedon. When he cast his eyes around him, and saw no other height to which he could climb, and no other nations which he might vanquish; he wept, as a child over his plaything, because he has not found in it the enjoyment which a plaything cannot give. The trial was complete. Experience has here proved, that this passion can never be satisfied.

The gratifications, which it sought, were here furnished in a continual and overflowing stream. The wishes were scarcely formed, when the objects of them were poured into the lap of the man: and, as new desires sprang up, new objects arose in exuberant abundance to satisfy them. No interruption stopped their career. No disaster abated their energy. Whatsoever his soul lusted after Alexander acquired. Yet no child of Adam was ever less satisfied. His desires grew and multiplied, incomparably faster than his gratifications. A beggar, whose precarious subsistence is derived from casual and frosty charity, is less hungry, less craving, than was this renowned hero, this monarch of the world. Look at this picture. It is a faithful portrait of all men, whose ruling passion is the love of distinction.

It is a distressing disposition. Ungratified desires are always distressing. The mind, which is under their control, like the unclean spirit, mentioned by our Saviour, *seeketh rest, and findeth none*. The objects, in which the enjoyment, so eagerly pursued, is supposed to reside, may be indeed, and often are, obtained: but they are the fruit, mentioned by the great English Poet; a thin envelope, covering bitter ashes.

But how often is this passion disappointed of these objects. How often is the *place*, sought, given to another, whose conscience is more supple; whose feelings are more sycophantic; whose manners are more puppet-like; who will perform more, and baser, services; who will bribe higher, and sell his soul for an inferior price. *Suffrages* will be given to a rival, of superior merit, aided by more and more powerful friends; of a more persuasive demeanour; bending more easily before every breath of popularity; or perhaps more boastful of his own performances; uttering more *swelling words of vanity*; more cunning; more false; and floating more easily with every tide. How mortifying to a man, possessing any remains of worth, any sober claims to respect, must it be to be found in the race with such wretches, as most of these. How deeply humiliating to see them preferred to himself. Enter the chase of distinction; and you will in all probability, at no great distance of time, have this humbling tale told of yourselves.

In the mean time a thousand other distresses will assail you from other quarters, of which you have never dreamed. The darling object, seriously cherished, will soon become your only object. No disposition sooner, or easier, becomes habitual: and no habit is stronger. When you have failed of the pursuit, you may truly say with Micah to the authors of the failure, "Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?" Where was there ever found on this side of the grave a being, who was more completely a wretch, than he, who after toiling, and bustling, and struggling, for distinction, night and day through the best periods of his life; after supplicating the favour of the great, and begging for the votes of the many; sees himself finally laid aside, like an useless piece of furniture in a garret, never more to be called for, but forgotten as if he had never been?

But this is not all. Men of every class perfectly understand the nature of this disposition, and estimate it accordingly. Its base, worthless character is discerned even by an obtuse eye; and, were it not, is completely displayed by him who possesses it. Wherever it is seen, it is despised by all, who look on; and by wise and good men is regarded with abhorrence. The esteem of such men, and their consequent numberless and invaluable kind offices, you, if you are controlled by this propensity, will lose, and lose irrevoca-

bly. These are solid blessings ; weighed against which all the good, gained by the love of distinction, is *the drop of the bucket, and the small dust of the balance.*

On the other hand, *you will meet with numberless positive evils* from many, and various sources. Your rivals, in the prosecution of their contests with you, will be ingenious to spy out the places, in which you may be most easily and surely wounded ; and every man, however incased in armour, has some vital spot, which is left naked. Achilles was vulnerable in his heel : and there will never be wanting a Paris to infix the dart. Your declarations, your actions, your motives, will all be misconstrued and misrepresented. Your characters will be stung ; perhaps vitally. Your designs will be withstood by open and violent resistance, by fraud, by trick, and by every snaky effort, which the demon of electioneering can contrive or execute. Over your defeat your opposers ; and those, at times, men, *whom you would disdain to set with the dogs of your flock ;* will triumph with an exultation, which will be a mere counterpart to the insults of the basest of animals over the sick lion. You will be hated ; your character will be slandered ; and your happiness will be trampled in the dust. You will be obliged to carry on a tedious, vexatious, and interminable contest with enemies, against whom you will be ashamed to be seen contending ; and in which, often, nothing will be gained ; and, always, much will be suffered, and much lost. The enmity, which you will *excite*, will not unfrequently be extended through life ; and that, which you will *feel*, will, during the same period, rankle in your bosoms. In this manner your whole lives will be embittered.

To all these evils will be added *an entire subversion of the End, for which you were created.* Every human being was formed for the single purpose of glorifying his Maker. “ Whether you eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” This great purpose is accomplished by the uniform exercise of those affections, and the uniform adoption of that exactness of duty, which, together, are styled piety ; supreme love, gratitude, reverence, and resignation to God ; by the faithful cultivation of self-denial ; and by a regular extension of benevolence and beneficence to our fellow-men. These, united with the faith and repentance of

the Gospel, constitute the whole moral excellence of the man ; and are all, that is lovely in the sight of our Maker.

But to this excellence the spirit, censured in this discourse, is only hostile. No man, who is governed by the love of distinction, can be pious, self-denying, or benevolent. This *pride of life is not of the Father, but of the world.*

I have already remarked, that no passion sooner becomes habitual ; and that no habit acquires greater strength. I add, that no passion more speedily, or more entirely, swallows up every other propensity ; or more absolutely engrosses all the powers, and efforts, of the man. A spark at first, *set on fire of hell*, it soon *kindles the whole course of nature.* All the views of the mind, its affections, its purposes, its labours, are made the bondslaves of this passion, which rules the miserable subject with a rod of iron ; and scourges and goads him onward to every perpetration, subservient to its purposes. The victim of its despotism soon becomes insensible to the remonstrances of conscience, and the awful control of moral obligation ; is blinded to every future and eternal object ; forgets that he has a soul, which must be saved or lost ; and turns a deaf ear to the most terrible threatenings of the divine law, and to the most affectionate calls of mercy in the Gospel. In this manner will you, if enslaved by this passion, go on in the career of hardened, stupid, sottish iniquity. Your probation will be lost in pursuing a gaudy phantom, which you will never overtake ; or which, if overtaken, will dissolve at the touch, and vanish from your sight. The golden moments of life will be gone, ere you are aware ; and will leave you poor, and miserable, and wretched, and in want of all things really good, and really deserving the attachment of an immortal mind. In the midst of your course, or while you feel yourselves to be in the midst of it, death will find you labouring and bustling to be great ; and thinking of nothing less than of his approach ; will compel you to the grave, and hurry you to your final account. How terrible must be the account, given of life, spent only in labouring to acquire distinction. Adam indulged this disposition once ; and lost his immortality. Satan indulged this disposition once ; and was cast out of heaven. What will become of him, who has eagerly followed this career of his

apostate first parent, and of this apostate angel, throughout the whole of his probation ?

Such is the *Nature*, and such the *Termination*, of this darling attribute of the human mind ; of the disposition, more cherished, more indulged, and more praised, than any other by the children of men. Let me exhort you to consider what is the *End*, which it proposes. It is the exaltation of one's self above his fellow-men, or above that little circle, which he sees around him. It is the exaltation of a frail, mortal being, born yesterday of the dust, to return to the dust to-morrow. If successful in his pursuits, seated in an office, or wreathed with laurel, to-day ; and to-morrow buried, with all his honours, in the grave ; to become the feast of worms, and the prey of corruption. This mortal believes himself to know much, merely because others know little ; to be great, because others are small ; and to be important, only because those around him are insignificant.

One thing, however, he knows : and this is, that his life, and all things which are suspended on it, and, among them, the very objects which he so eagerly covets, are absolutely precarious. He neither knows, nor can know, what a day may bring forth. Every thing future is hidden behind a cloud, through which his eye cannot penetrate. Yet he sees the life of others, and therefore his own, to be a vapour ; which appears, only to vanish. On this transient, perilous life is suspended his all ; himself ; his soul ; his immortal being. With his eyes open, he is marching onward to the grave ; behind an immense train, who have already entered that dark and solitary mansion ; and before another train, innumerable also, who are hastening to the same chambers of silence and sorrow. The grave is the gate of Eternity. Here all things, of real importance, are found ; things on the one hand incomprehensibly awful and distressing, and on the other immeasurably glorious and delightful. On the right, shines with everlasting day the world of life : on the left, embosomed in eternal night, spread the regions of perdition. In one of these realms this vain, miserable, dying creature is to spend his eternal existence. God has made him a candidate for glory, honour and immortality. The path, which leads to this divine inheritance, the Son of God has marked out before him. The gate, which opens

to it, he has unbarred with his own hand. Nay, he stands at the entrance, pointing with his finger to the celestial mansions; to the lucid path, which ascends to them from this miserable world; to the angels, and the assembly of the first-born, who dwell in that delightful region; to the throne of grace, erected in it; to the river of life, which flows from its foot; and to the tree of life, which blossoms, and bears its fruits, on the banks of that river. With these divine objects in full view, this glorious person calls, with a voice of infinite tenderness, to the poor, unhappy outcast to *come, and take the water of life freely*. He proffers himself, his righteousness, his intercession, and all the blessings of his redemption; blessings unlimited, and endless; to this miserable sinner. At the same time he calls to him with a voice, mingled with terror and compassion, to fix his eye on the gloom, the sorrow, the despair, which shroud the world of woe; and to listen to the murmur of sighs, and groans, which ascend from its melancholy caverns forever and ever. But the man is deaf as an adder; blinder than a mole; and possessed of a heart, harder than adamant. He feels, he knows, no object but one, which is of any value; and this is *the praise of men*. To be caressed by men in power is dearer to him than to be loved by his God; to be flattered by the multitude, than to be approved by angels; to be admired, than to be virtuous; to acquire an office, than to gain a crown of immortal glory.

Such, my young friends, is a true account of the nature, the purpose, the attendants, and the consequences of that ambition, which every human heart feels more or less, and which has originated, not improbably, more of the actions of men than any other attribute of the mind. Let me now call upon you to weigh this interesting subject in an equal balance. Your interests are immortal, and inestimable. I hope you believe, that they are dear to *me*. The relations, which I have borne to you, of your Instructor and Minister, are nearer, and more affecting, than you at this period of life can easily realize; and approximate closely to those of a parent to his children. The time, which you have spent under my instruction, has given much pleasure to me; and yielded much credit, and, I hope, profit, to yourselves. It is impossible for me to be indifferent to your welfare. I cannot for-

get, that you are immortal, and that you are candidates for heaven ; that you may do extensive good to yourselves and your fellow-men in this world, and may obtain a glorious and divine happiness in the world which is to come. I cannot forget, that you may, also, do much evil, here, both to yourselves and others ; and that you may suffer immeasurable evil beyond the grave. Who, that has a heart, not made of marble, can look at these mighty objects, and be unmoved ?

From a course of life, gay, gaudy, fascinating, bewildering ; a course more or less pursued by all men, and therefore sanctioned by the common voice, as well as the general example ; a course, vain, disappointing, originally sinful, ultimately profligate, and immensely dangerous ; I have endeavoured to dissuade you. I will now in a very few words point out to you another, which I earnestly wish and urge you to pursue.

Seek, with my full approbation, *the Esteem of your fellow-men.* This is a valuable possession. To be esteemed is beyond measure more desirable than to be admired. The path, which conducts to it, is more safe, more honourable, more delightful : and the reward, which is achieved, is widely different, and wholly superior. Prize *the good name*, which the Scriptures prize ; and you will escape both from error and sin.

Especially, seek *the approbation of wise and good men.* The approbation of all others, even of those, who have abandoned their duty and their consciences, will follow theirs. The great reason, why you may safely pursue this object, is, that *it can be gained only by wisdom and virtue.* So long as you aim at it, your designs and your measures will all pass in review before the eye of Conscience ; and will be either adopted or rejected, as they shall be approved or disapproved by this tribunal. Your *duty*, here, will of course become the commanding object : for by the performance of your duty, only, can the reward be acquired.

With still more watchful and earnest solicitude labour to acquire *the approbation of your own Minds.* Conscience is the guide, given you by God himself, to direct your moral conduct. Enlightened by the word of God, its decisions may, in all ordinary circumstances, be confidently relied on as just, safe, and happy. In every plain case, *the first dictates of the mind are far more safe*

than those, which follow a train of reasoning. The very act of deliberating, in such cases, will prove, that your hearts are unsound, and yourselves in danger. But the supreme danger lies in balancing between conscience and passion, between sober judgment and ardent feeling. Conscience is your friend: passion is your enemy. Conscience is sincere: passion is deceitful. Conscience is patient, sober, watchful, awake to every danger, and guarded against every sin: passion is thoughtless, headlong, sottiſh in its wiſhes, infatuated in its deciſions, blind to danger, and palsied to the ſenſe of guilt. Conscience brings peace in hand; and points your eyes to immortal glory in reversion: passion conducts you in this world through a wilderness of thorns and briars; and hurries you to woes inexpressible, and endless, in the world to come. But among all the passions, which mislead, endanger, and harass, the mind, none is more hostile to its peace, none more blind, none more delirious, than the love of distinction.

Still more fervently seek for *the approbation of God.* Had the miserable Jewish rulers mentioned in the text, loved *the praise of God*, and disregarded *the praise of men*; they had never practically denied the Redeemer, nor failed of a blessed immortality. In the favour of God lies all your welfare, and all your hope. If he is your friend; it is of no consequence who is your enemy. If he is your enemy; you will have no friend. But his friendship can be obtained only in his own way: and that way is but one. You are sinners, together with all your fellow-men; and can become reconciled to him only by faith in his Son. *He* is the only, the true, the living, way of access to God; to the world of life; to endless glory. Give up yourselves, therefore, to him with a cordial confidence: and the great work of life is done. If this be not done; you will have lived in vain.

The world, in which you are, is proverbially, as well as justly, styled *a vale of tears.* Far from me be every wish to embitter, or to lessen, the hope of happiness which you may find in the present life, by unnecessary predictions of disappointment, trouble, and sorrow. But you ought to know, you ought to be told, that the bright views and ardent anticipations which youths form of worldly good, are deceitful and visionary; that, by promising too much, they lessen such enjoyments as will be actually found; and

by concealing the sorrows of life, enhance its anguish when they arrive. You will meet with many troubles; many temptations; and many enemies; as you pass onward towards the grave; and, before you have gone far, may end your course in that melancholy mansion. Sooner or later you *must* die. Your souls must take their flight into eternity; must appear before the bar of God; must be judged and rewarded. Think of the amazing nature of this trial; of the infinite importance of this reward.

Who, amid all these distresses and dangers, this troubled and difficult progress of an immortal mind towards its final destiny, can be a guide, on which it may safely rely; a friend, on whose bosom it may repose with consolation and hope? Who can direct, support, comfort, and deliver you, amid the perils and sufferings of the present life? Can your earthly friends? They will be far from you. Can your parents? They will be in the grave. Can the multitude? They will not even know your calamities: and, if they should, will disregard them. Can the great? Alas! their hands are ice, and their hearts adamant.

But were all these present; were they affectionate; were they friends indeed; how little is the relief, which they would be able to give. Where is the balm, with which they could sooth a wounded spirit; blunt the stings of conscience; and charm to peace the fears of an approaching retribution? What physician can heal the last sickness? Who can *redeem his brother, and give to God a ransom for him, that he should live forever, and not see corruption?* Who can console the poor, departing spirit, when it stretches its wings for the final flight? Who can accompany it to the last tribunal? How mighty, how acceptable, how prevailing, ought to be the Advocate, who shall there plead its cause: a cause of more importance than all those which have been decided in this world from the beginning; and on the issue of which more will depend than on the fate of all the empires, which have risen beneath the sun. These things, infinitely interesting to every one of you, He only can perform, who *speaks in righteousness*, and who *is mighty to save*; who hath said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth: for I am God; and there is none else."

To him, therefore, give up yourselves with the whole heart, in that covenant, which is ordered in all things, sure, and eternal.

Fear not. *He will in no wise cast you out. He will never leave you nor forsake you.* His eye, before which *the night shineth as the day*, will watch over you with unceasing care; and his hand, which nothing can resist or escape, guard you with infinite tenderness. In every sorrow he will comfort; in every danger he will deliver. The bed of death he will spread with down. The passage into eternity he will illumine with the *light of his own countenance*. In the judgment he will acquit you of all your guilt; and in his own house, the mansion of eternal light, and peace, and joy, he will present you to his Father as trophies of his cross, and monuments of his boundless love. There he will raise you to a distinction, which no ambitious mind ever conceived, or coveted. I say, a distinction, which no ambitious mind ever conceived, or coveted. What comparison can be formed, not by a Votary of Ambition; a mere worldling; *a creeping thing*, whose path through life has been made in mire and dirt; but by a sanctified mind; whose thoughts wander, daily, into the regions of bliss; between robes of state and *the fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints*, between a wreath of laurel and a crown of immortal glory, between an earthly monarch and an heir of God, between a hero, and him who has triumphed over sin, and death, and the grave? What likeness can you find between earth and heaven; time and eternity; frail, sinful, dying, worms of the dust, and *the spirits of just men made perfect*, purified from every stain, informed with endless life, and lovely in the sight of God? If you covet distinction let it be the glory, honour, and immortality, of angels. Let the name, for which you sigh, and toil, be that, which is written in the Lamb's book of life. Let the praise, to which you aspire, be the approbation of Jehovah.

SERMON XXVIII.

ON INDEPENDENCE OF MIND.

PREACHED TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE BACCALAUREATE
IN 1815.



JOSHUA i. 6, 7.

Be strong, and of a good courage, for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers, to give them. Only be thou strong, and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses, my servant, commanded thee. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left; that thou mayest prosper, whithersoever thou goest.

THESE words were addressed by God to Joshua, the great captain of Israel, who led that nation into the promised land. He was now immediately to enter upon this mighty undertaking; and was promised the most absolute success. "Every place," said God to him, "that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. There shall not be any man, that shall be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee. I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

To these promises, however, was inseparably annexed the condition expressed in the text; which immediately follows the last of them. "This book of the law," says God to him, in the eighth verse, "shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do accord-

ing to all, that is written therein. For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

The importance of fulfilling this condition is evident from the words, in which the injunction is conveyed. It is, also, forcibly impressed by numerous repetitions. It is thrice repeated, in the 31st chapter of Deuteronomy; in the 6th, 7th, and 23d, verses; where the duty was enjoined directly by Moses. It is also thrice repeated in the first of Joshua by God himself; in the 6th, 7th, and 9th, verses. The import of the repetition needs no explanation.

The duty of Joshua was *to obey all the law of God*, as revealed to Moses. The strength and courage, which he was required to possess and exercise, were to be wholly employed in performing his duty; and *to possess these attributes, and to exercise them practically*, was a primary part of his duty. It may be thought, that Joshua needed the character formed by them in a peculiar degree, on account of the arduous nature of the enterprise which he was about to commence. That he needed it in a high degree, and that it was eminently demanded by this enterprise, cannot be questioned. No more can it be questioned, that it is indispensably necessary to every child of Adam, in order to the performance of his own duty. Every man, indeed, is not the Chief magistrate, nor the Military leader, of a great people. Every man is not summoned to the sufferings of a military life, nor to the dangers of battle. But every man, who is willing to do his duty, will be called to encounter much opposition, many difficulties, and what he, at least, will apprehend to be dangers. For these he will need firmness and resolution as truly, as they were necessary to Joshua: and without the exercise of them his duty will not be done.

Firmness and resolution, united, constitute what is commonly called *Independence of mind*; a character, challenged, and boasted of by most men, but rarely possessed, and very little understood. Probably there is nothing more frequently mistaken by our race at large, or even by men of superior intelligence. Various false opinions concerning it I shall have occasion to expose in the progress of this discourse.

My design in choosing this subject, as the theme of discussion at the present time, is

1. *To explain its Nature;*

2. *To show its Importance ;*

3. *To unfold the Difficulty of acquiring, and exercising, it ;*

4. *To exhibit several Motives to the assumption of it, especially in early life.*

All these subjects I shall address directly to the Youths, for whom this discourse is particularly intended.

1. *I shall explain the Nature of this attribute.*

Various definitions may be given of mental Independence, and all of them be just. Of several which are obvious, any one may, perhaps, be selected without material disadvantage. I shall consider it as *that state of mind, in which a man firmly resolves to do his duty, without any anxious regard to consequences.* When his duty is involved in *the reception of Truth*, which is one of the two great divisions of our duty, the man, who is independent, will search for truth with a diligence and perseverance suited to its value ; will weigh with candour whatever evidence he may obtain ; and will form his conclusions agreeably to that evidence, unbiassed by any private interest or any sinister view, and uninfluenced by the authority of others, their opinions, their wishes, their friendship, their enmity, the advantages which he may hope to gain by according with them, the disadvantages which he may expect to suffer by opposing them, their applause, or their obloquy. Truth he will consider as inestimably valuable : and all these objects, so operative on the minds of most men, will, in comparison with it, be, to his eye, *less than nothing, and vanity.*

When *Action* becomes his duty, he will act as his Conscience dictates ; with a determined opposition to all the objects which I have specified. Truth he will declare, however his own private interest may be affected by the declaration, and however others may be disposed to treat him. Virtue he will practice, in the face of opposing friends, an opposing party, or an opposing world. Like the intrepid Baxter, he will separate himself alike from the Royalists, and the Parliament ; and will censure, or commend, both, as censure or commendation may be merited by either. Like the still more intrepid Paul, he will boldly meet the frowns of the Pharisees, the formidable hostility of the Sanhedrim, and the bigotted violence of the whole Jewish nation, and will still possess the exalted character, disclosed in this memorable declara-

tion: "The Holy Ghost witnesseth, that in every city bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

But this character will be more distinctly apprehended from a comparison with its counterfeits. Among these are the following.

First. There are some persons, who regard themselves as possessing independence of mind, *because they differ in their opinions from others; particularly, when they reject such, as are generally received.*

The general reception of any opinion, except where mankind have a complete capacity and opportunity to judge; *and where at the same time they determine without, or against, their inclinations and prejudices; is certainly no proof, that it is just.* Still less is it evidence, that it is untrue. In all cases, where mankind at large have the means of judging, and are under no violent prejudices, their agreement in any doctrine is a presumption in its favour. The agreement, also, of men of superior wisdom and worth, though furnishing no decisive evidence that they are right, is yet so much of an argument in favour of their doctrines, as to demand a serious examination of them, before we resolve to adopt such as are of a contrary nature. Yet there are persons in the world, particularly among the young, who, while they are ardently ambitious to sustain the characters of independent thinkers, feel, that they actually assume it by merely differing from others. Of this there can be no doubt, because they frequently declare it; and boast of it not a little, as being the proper exercise and decisive proof of free, independent thought. Those also, who harmonize in their opinions either with the public, or with persons of distinguished respectability, they often pronounce to be enslaved, priest-ridden, blinded by prejudice, and awed by authority. These silly men are so weak, as to know nothing of independence, but the name; and do not discern, that this envied attribute consists, not in rejecting the opinions of others, but in rejecting error; not in receiving opinions contrary to those of others, but in receiving those, which are supported by evidence.

Of this class have been a great proportion of Infidels. These men, in Great Britain, styled themselves at a very early period Free Thinkers: while they regarded Christians as being perfectly enslaved by authority, fear, and prejudice. Accordingly they gloried not a little in this character; and considered themselves as the only men, whose minds were unshackled. Christians they pronounced credulous; because they believed the Scriptures to be the word of God; and themselves free from credulity, because they did not thus believe. They did not perceive, what was yet very obvious, that the whole difference between them and Christians, in this respect, was, that *Christians believed the Scriptures to be the Word of God, and they believed them not to be the word of God.* The Christians believed a positive, and they, a negative, proposition. The credulity, therefore, was chargeable to those, whoever they were, who believed with the least evidence; whether they were styled believers, or unbelievers.

Secondly. There are others, who claim this character, *from the mere indulgence of Passion.*

The passion, which operates in this case, may be pride, vanity, ambition, enthusiasm, anger, and perhaps several others. There is no independence of mind, founded in passion. The indulgence of it may, indeed, make us feel for the season superior to all other persons, and to all received opinions. But the existence of passion, in most cases, is in a comparative sense momentary; and, when it ceases, the mind sinks as much below, as it had before risen above, the usual level. It has, in this case, no support, but the state of feeling. It possesses no arguments, no conviction of its own rectitude, no smiles of conscience, no approbation of God, and no sincere approbation of its fellow-men. Haman, whose soul was the seat of passion, the very moment, when he was commanded to honour Mordecai, sunk, with all his pride, into the dust. Circumstances furnished all his apparent energy of character; and, when they ceased to exist, it vanished. How different was the conduct of the meek and humble Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. At the very mouth of the fiery furnace, they said, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace; and he will de-

liver us out of thine hand O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image, which thou hast set up."

It is to be remembered, that persons of this description are no more firmly established in their opinions, than determined in conduct. When circumstances favour, they may be both fixed, and strenuous: When not, they are weak, and variable. Such men will never become martyrs: nor can any reliance be safely placed upon them in seasons of trial. They will then forsake their opinions, their friends, their party, their country, and their religion. He, who trusts them, trusts in Egypt: *a broken reed, on which if a man lean, it will thrust through his hand, and pierce him.*

Thirdly. Some men think themselves independent, because *they believe Paradoxes*. Paradoxes are propositions, which in appearance are absurd, and which in truth usually are so. A considerable number of our race, however, desirous of being thought to possess superior discernment, and to burst the shackles imposed by the acknowledged rules of thinking, seem willing to receive nothing which is directly commended to the intellect by obvious evidence; and spend a great part of life in hunting for paradoxes, and announcing them to others. Such men must believe, that truth, especially important truth, exists only in seeming contradictions, and that God has so constituted the mind, that it cannot discern it directly, but only through the medium of apparent absurdity. Yet no men value themselves more upon their opinions than dealers in paradoxes; or feel more raised above that slavery of thought, which is opposed to genuine independence. I wish you to remember, that there is a vacuity in the head of every lover of paradoxes; and that he adopts his opinions, merely from the desire of being distinguished from others.

Fourthly. There are multitudes, who claim the character of independence, *because they act in these modes, and from these principles.*

It is unnecessary to add any thing to what has been said, for the purpose of exposing the erroneusness of this conduct.

True independence of mind, with regard to *Action*, consists in conforming to the words of the text; in *being strong, and of a good courage, to do all the law of God*; in other words, to do what is

right ; and in not turning aside from it either to the right hand or to the left. In receiving truth, the only possible guide to rectitude, it consists in an exact conformity to those memorable injunctions of St. Paul, given to the Thessalonian Christians : “ Prove all things : hold fast that which is good,” or true.

It does not, however, consist solely in piety ; or at least in such piety, as mankind attain. It is partially constituted of a peculiar firmness of mind, in some degree, perhaps, original ; and certainly always habitual : a firmness, which is chiefly the result of sober consideration, and of repeated and vigorous efforts of mental energy to adhere to its own decisions. This firmness, this determined energy of character, in a small number of the human race has existed in such a degree, without any just or fixed moral principles, as to compel the admiration of mankind, even while the actions of these men have excited detestation and horror. Such were Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Tamerlane, Charles the twelfth, the Emperor Napoleon, and various others. Such have been multitudes in humbler life, distinguished not only for the resolution which faces danger, but the firmness, also, which sustains sufferings. I cannot enter into an analysis of the character, discovered by these men. It will be sufficient for my purpose to observe, that, in addition to their native or acquired firmness of mind, they have been vehemently ardent, and eminently proud, ambitious, destitute of moral principle, and regardless of consequences. While they have been prosperous, or have entertained strong hopes of success, they have been firm : and sometimes, when they have utterly failed, the pride and ambition, which have sustained them in their seasons of prosperity with so much vigour, have enabled them to meet sufferings and death with an unabated energy. The spirit, with which they have acted and endured, is the same, which animates the western Indian to the chase, and to the battle ; and inspires him to sustain the tortures of his enemies, not only with unbroken fortitude, but with exultation and triumph.

From these observations it is evident, that, independently of principle, the mind, in certain circumstances, may possess a high degree of energy, which is native, originally inwoven in its constitution, and invigorated by its circumstances ; especially by

those repeated exertions, which form it into a powerful habit. Yet it is to be remembered, that most, if not all. men of this description lose their energy, when their situation becomes hopelessly unprosperous. Their ardour ceases to be kindled; their efforts fail of success; and they are left to the cool consideration produced by disappointment, and to the reflections generated by retirement and humiliation.

On the other hand there are many Christians, who possess in very feeble degrees Independence of mind. To some extent, greater or less, they are reasonably believed to be pious, because in ordinary circumstances they produce the fruits of piety. Still they are timid in greater or less degrees; wavering both as to their principles and practices; awed by the opinions of the world; dreading unpopularity; afraid of obloquy; and startled at the appearance of opposition. These men plainly need something, beside the degree of piety which they possess, to prompt them to *endure hardness, as good soldiers of Christ.*

It will be readily admitted, that the Apostle Peter was unquestionably a pious man. His native temper was ardent, even to rashness; but, like other men of this temper, he became timorous, and seems easily to have been overcome, in seasons of peculiar trial. This infirm spirit betrayed him into the gross crime of denying his Master, and all the sins, with which it was attended. This led him to dissemble at Antioch; when Paul *withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.* How many Christians, since that period, have followed him in the paths of sin, from the same mental imbecility. Were faith, indeed, possessed by Christians in a sufficient degree; it would, itself, become sufficiently energetic to encounter every difficulty, and every suffering; and overcome with a decisive victory, not only the lust, allurements, and snares, of the world, but its hostility, slander, and persecution.

Thus it is evident, that *genuine Independence of mind is a combination of native, or acquired, Energy, habitually established; an ardent attachment to Truth; and sincere Piety.* This attribute will enable him, who possesses it, alike to encounter difficulties, and sustain sufferings; to be moderate in prosperity, and serene in adversity; to hold truth, and practice righteousness, in opposition to a world; resolutely to perform his duty; and calmly leave the consequences to God. This is the character, enjoined in the text,

and urged in this discourse ; the character of Moses, Daniel, and Paul, and in a greater or less degree of all, who approximate to the standard of these distinguished men. How different from that of the votaries of ambition, already mentioned. What an appearance, think you, would the man who fled from Wilna, Leipsic, and Waterloo, have made before the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, or at the mouth of the den of Lions ?

2. The *Importance* of this attribute may be in some measure seen in the following particulars.

It is repeatedly enjoined as our duty in the Scriptures.

It is absolutely necessary to the attainment of an honourable Character : such, I mean, as is solid, unblemished, and enduring. No man, who is seen to be timid, wavering, and imbecile, can be holden in high estimation. Whatever talents he may possess ; whatever exploits he may perform ; mankind, if they discern, that he possesses this character, will soon regard him with a mixture of pity and contempt. His want of Independence will be a blot, which nothing can wipe away.

It is indispensable to the acquisition of Confidence.

No man will confide in him, who, whatever other qualities he may possess, is expected to shrink from his duty in the time of trial : and who, instead of pursuing the straight and narrow path of rectitude, wanders onward in a zig zag course ; which, while it is intended to have the same general direction, is also intended to shun the difficulties and dangers, which may await him in his progress. The

“ Justum et tenacem propositi virum ; ”

“ The man resolved, and steady to his trust,

Inflexible to ill, and obstinately just ; ”

is the only object of settled, rational reliance in the present world.

Hence, it is indispensable to almost all our Usefulness. Little can be done in this state of existence, and probably in any other, by an insulated individual. All extensive usefulness is derived from *the co-operation of others* in the promotion of important purposes. To obtain this co-operation, we must have influence over them. To acquire influence, we must have their Confidence : and to gain confidence, we must possess Independence of mind.

It is indispensable to the performance of almost every duty, private

or public. An imbecile mind performs the private duties of life in a very imperfect manner ; by halves ; in fragments ; so as to require pardon and pity ; not so as to merit approbation. Public duties are by such a man scarcely done at all. A great part of his time is spent in calculating and dreading the consequences of his conduct ; in solicitously enquiring what the world will think, and say, and do ; in trembling under the expectation of censure ; in bartering his conscience for his quiet ; in endeavouring to steal into popularity by bending before the breath of the public ; and in withering beneath the frost of popular odium. In all this he only cheats himself of the very good, at which he aims. Were he possessed of genuine intrepidity ; he would take the direct path to the character, which he covets. He would be respected while living, and honoured when dead, by all the wise and good, and by most even of the foolish and wicked.

It is indispensable to our safety from temptation, and sin. The prevarication of Abraham, and Isaac ; the reluctance of Moses to bear the messages of God to Pharaoh ; the miserable omission of duty towards his children in Eli ; Peter's denial of his Master, and his dissimulation at Antioch ; all sprang from mental imbecility. So have the sins of thousands and millions of others in succeeding periods. The Independence, which I am recommending, is the garrison of the soul ; firm ; determined ; ready to defend the fortress against every enemy, and at every hazard. Without it, the walls are broken down ; the gate left open ; and the enemy invited to take an undisputed possession.

It is indispensable to peace of Conscience. A feeble, timid, wavering mind is always in a state of suspense about every important duty ; and such suspense is another name for wretchedness. For the omission of the duties which it should perform, and the sins, which, instead of them, it has actually committed, it is continually reproached by Conscience, and pierced by stings from which it cannot retire. Its controlling disposition is felt not only to be criminal, but base, and despicable. Under the sense of what it ought to have done, and the consciousness of what it has done, it sinks into the dust, and sickens at every review of its character.

The man, possessed of mental Independence, looks back on the contrary, with a serene and delightful survey, to the past events

of his life. So far as is competent to the character of human beings, he has resolutely, and firmly, done his duty. Instead of shrinking from difficulties and opposers; he has strenuously overcome the former, and vanquished the latter. His *path* has, therefore, been *as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*. Who can fail to survey this charming object with pleasure? With what delight must it be viewed by the traveller himself? How few, comparatively, must be his causes for regret! How many for self-approbation!

3. *The Difficulty of acquiring, and exercising, Independence of mind I shall illustrate by a single consideration, viz. that it is so rarely found.*

How few, even in private life, are the men, how few the companions, or the friends; on whom you, limited as is your experience, would willingly rely in cases of importance and difficulty. How far more rare will you find such men, when you become better acquainted with the human character, and the feeble, irresolute disposition of the human heart. Multitudes, indeed, you will daily hear boasting of their Independence. All these are mere bullies. Their courage exists, and evaporates, in words. In the time of trial they will prove cowards. True Independence *vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up*.

In this country personal liberty is enjoyed in as absolute a degree, as it has been ever enjoyed by civilized man. Yet, in instances almost literally numberless, the inhabitants are plainly destitute of the independent character, to which they make such high pretensions. What multitudes of them are absolutely slaves to party; and in how many instances primarily, because they are afraid to embrace truth, or practice righteousness? How many of them bow their necks to that iron yoke; *the influence of demagogues*? How many of them vote in direct contradiction to their consciences, and for men, whom in their hearts they detest: and all this from *the fear of being censured by their neighbours*. In these, and in all similar, cases, instead of adhering to truth and righteousness; the great objects, to which our thoughts and actions ought to be directed as uniformly, as the needle to the pole; the man is awed and controlled, by the opinion of his neighbours, his party, or the public. His soul is a slave to those around him; enthralled in as absolute, and far more degrading, and pernicious,

bondage, than that of the unhappy African. How undeserving is such a person of the name of a freeman, of which he boasts so triumphantly, and, while he wears this iron yoke, so shamefully.

Others, as we have had the most abundant opportunity of witnessing, adopt the same unworthy conduct *under the domination of their passions*. Not a small number, from pride; and peculiarly from the pride of self-consistency. They have appeared as the members and champions of a party; and, although completely satisfied that they have done wrong, and stung by their consciences for the wrong which they have done, they are too proud to acknowledge or repair it. Thus, goaded by this despicable passion, they go on, in the face of truth and righteousness, adding iniquity to iniquity; rather than by a manly and honourable effort emancipate themselves from this wretched servitude.

Others, still, make this sacrifice from *the desire of office and its emoluments*. These men are the bond slaves, partly of what they mistake for honour, and partly of avarice; and barter their souls for a place, with an immensely corrupt and scandalous prostitution of their talents; in order to obtain the wages of iniquity.

This spirit spreads through the world; and pervades all ranks, and ages. In the hall of legislation how often do we hear it proverbially said, that this and that man *keeps his finger on the key-hole of the Treasury*, in order to secure popularity. And how often does this wretched, shallow fetch, this trick within the compass of a school boy's faculties, succeed. How many others durst not vote for the expenditure of public money for highly important, and even absolutely necessary, public purposes; because the measure will be unpopular, and they dread the loss of a re-election. Of what value is such an election? Of none, except as it may enable the candidate to do good. Yet, here, good is not done; nor intended to be done; but evil. I have seen a legislature, and one of high reputation, refuse to pay a just, acknowledged debt; a debt, demanded by the highest considerations of gratitude as well as of equity; merely from the want of honest independence, and because the payment would have been unpopular.

How often, also, does the Executive magistrate shrink from the execution of the laws; and that, while under the solemn obliga-

tion of his oath of office ; because he fears to give offence. How many of those petty crimes, which extensively disturb the peace of Society, are suffered to go on unmolested ; especially when committed by persons of some consequence, or by their children ; because the prosecution of them will be unpopular, or will at least provoke the resentment of those, who are to be punished. " I will set no wicked thing before my eyes," said David : " I hate the work of them, who turn aside ; it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me : I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off. He, that telleth lies ; shall not tarry in my sight. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land ; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord." Glorious magistrate ! of whom it is testified by the voice of God, that *he executed justice and judgment unto all his people.*

A single example of a contrary nature, painful to every feeling of humanity, and shocking to every principle of religion, will sufficiently illustrate the state of our Israel. Brothels exist, in greater or less numbers, in every considerable American city ; and exist in peace. They stand, in a sense, under the eaves of our temples ; and shade, and insult, the very altars of Christianity. Instead of razing these nuisances from our land, not a hand is lifted, not a voice is heard, against them. Except in a solitary instance, or two, there has been *none, that has moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.* Magistrates and ministers, walk quietly by these walls of perdition : and sons, and even fathers, from year to year, and from age to age, enter without molestation, without even an admonition, the *house, which is the way to hell,* and go down together to the chambers of death.

Christians, and particularly Ministers of the Gospel, are probably more distinguished for Independence of mind than any other class of men. Yet how many of both, like good Hezekiah, ardently wish to have *peace in their day* ; so ardently, as to make sacrifices, which he, probably, would never have made. How many Christians are afraid to use vigorous measures for supporting even a Minister, whom they love ; although every day witnesses the embarrassments, the discouragements, the distresses, under which he labours for the want of such support. How many, when he is attacked by the hands of heresy, worldliness, and hatred,

stand aloof in the time of trial; and, without a serious effort to befriend him, permit his enemies to drive him from his place; to destroy, or at least to impair, his usefulness; and to multiply sufferings for both him and his family.

Instances, also, are unhappily but too numerous, in which Ministers themselves, under all the solemn obligations of their office, and with all the tremendous motives before them, which should prompt them to fulfil the duties of it faithfully, speak *smooth things to their hearers, and prophesy deceits*; lest the downy couch, on which they love to repose, should be converted into a bed of thorns. How many fear to preach those doctrines of the Gospel, which are especially painful and humiliating to the sinful mind. How many are afraid to lift up their voice, as a trumpet, against predominant vices; against the sins of party; against the faults of such members of their congregations, as have weight and influence. "Son of man," said God to the prophet Ezekiel, "I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, 'O wicked man, thou shalt surely die;' if thou dost not speak, to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way, to turn from it, if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."

Of the late Mr. Weld, of Attleborough, in Massachusetts, a distinguished Minister of the Gospel, it is said by authority, which cannot be questioned, "As he regarded the Scriptures with the most profound reverence; so he taught the truths which he believed them to contain, in a manner absolutely undaunted, and unwarping. With the same intrepid spirit he reprov'd vice, of every kind. Not a riot, not a serious violation of order, not a scene of dissipation, escaped his rebukes from the desk. In his parochial visits he addressed the truths, and duties, of the Gospel to the hearts and consciences of the family: and while he administered the balm of life to the wounded spirit, he gave the most solemn alarms, as well as the most pungent reproofs, to stubbornness and impiety." Would to God, that all, who *prophesy*, prophesied in this manner.

Let me now ask you, my young friends, Which of these cha-

acters awakens the approbation of your own consciences? Are you willing to be the timid, wavering men, whom I have described? Are you willing to adopt their conduct? Are you willing to bow your necks to the yoke of party spirit, or public opinion, or to the weight and wishes of a few influential individuals; to truckle for popularity; to wade through the mire of dependence, in the train of a demagogue; to barter your consciences for suffrages, and sell your souls for a place? Can you enter the desk, to insult your Maker; crucify your Redeemer anew; and lead your congregations to perdition; rather than wound their ears by the painful, awful truths of the Gospel, or pierce their hearts by pungent reproofs for sin? Will such a wretched, serpentine course commend you to the eye of God; give peace to your consciences; blunt the thorns of a dying bed; spread your pillow with down; enable you to approach, with comfort and hope, the last tribunal; and be followed by "well done, good and faithful servants?"

4. *I will now exhibit several Motives to the assumption of this character in Youth.*

That it ought to be assumed by every man will not be questioned by him, who has not lost his senses. The observations, made under the preceding heads, particularly the second, place this truth beyond the limits of doubt; and the denial of it beyond those of decency.

You will here observe, that I am not recommending to you *military courage*. It is ardently to be hoped, that for this attribute there will be no future occasion in our native land. It is to be hoped, that God is about to scatter finally, and throughout the world, *the people, who delight in war*; and that the period is near, in which *the righteous shall flourish, with abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth*. I am urging upon you a character, incomparably more rare, and incomparably more valuable. It is a truth, which is proved by abundant experience, and of which the explanation is not difficult, that the Independence of mind recommended in this discourse, is harder to be assumed and exercised, than the spirit, which coolly marches up to "the imminent, deadly breach." The man, who will face a battery of cannon without shrinking, will tremble at the thought of giving his vote, in

opposition to the wishes of his party, or the voice of popular opinion. Feel then, that mental Independence is not a thing of course; that it demands consideration, effort, repetition, and habit; that it involves conviction, firmness, principle, and piety. If you realize not these things; you are not prepared for the influence of any motives, which I can suggest. Carry them, therefore, with you through the remainder of this discourse.

Perhaps you may object to all, which may be advanced, that the attainment is beyond your power; and that *such Independence is merely an endowment, and not an acquisition*. Why, let me ask you in answer to your objection, has God required this attribute at our hands? Why did he require it of Joshua in the text; and of the rest of mankind in other passages so numerous, as on this subject to constitute the whole tenor of the Scriptures? *Joshua was actually strong, and of a good courage, to do all the words of the law. Paul proved all things, and held fast that which is good.* Vast multitudes have preceded, and succeeded, these worthies; and many of them have lived in our own land, and in our own day. God cannot command what men cannot perform: and these men by their actual assumption of this character have proved, beyond debate, the practicability of assuming it, wherever men will be faithful to God and to themselves.

With these things premised, let me urge you to assume this character in the morning of life,

1st. *Because, otherwise, there is reason to fear, that you will never assume it.*

Your whole character is soon to be fixed; and, in most instances, beyond recall. The habits, of which it will be composed, are many of them already begun. Many others will soon be begun; and all at no distant period of time will be rivetted. Particularly, the habit of resisting temptations and dangers, or the opposite habit of yielding to them, invariably commences in youth, and is established in early manhood. If you are accustomed to resist; the spirit of resisting will continually increase its strength; and every instance, in which you overcome, will enable you to overcome with more ease, and more absolute success, in every future instance. If, on the contrary, you are accustomed to yield to these enemies; if solicitations to sin find in you a listening ear, a congenial heart, and ready hands; you will at every successive

period listen, and yield, with less and less reluctance. If you now submit your opinions to the opinions, or wishes, of others; if you conform your actions, either from the dread of censure, or the love of applause, the weight of authority or the influence of popular opinion, to the conduct which others may choose to pursue; you will soon become mere floating wood, swimming backward and forward with every tide. He, who has been accustomed to yield, whatever may be the impulse, will soon only yield. He, who has been accustomed to be overcome, will soon think of nothing but capitulating, and of making the best terms in his power. He ceases to be a warrior, an opposer; and is only a prey.

As one of these habits will certainly be formed in your youth, and will soon be immoveably rivetted; it is a concern of the highest moment to every one of you, that he should choose and establish that, which is safe, honourable, the means of virtue, and the means of life; rather than that, which is disgraceful, perilous, and only the means of sin, and ruin.

Secondly. *Because you will have a noble opportunity to do your duty.*

The useful part of your lives you will begin in the possession of this most profitable character. I have already told you, that it is formed of *a vigorous, habitual energy, fixed principle, and sincere piety.* What a happy preparation, at the most happy period, for performing all the duties of life! not those only, which are common and easy, but those also, which are great and arduous; such, as try the souls of men, and show the high superiority of worth, which a few individuals obtain over the mass. With what an enviable, what a mighty, advantage will you enter upon the career of life! Timid, wavering minds begin this career, incumbered with clogs, shackles, and fetters. Often they stop: not unfrequently they go backward. At the best, their progress is that of a snail; heavy, scarcely perceivable, and made in the dirt. At every step they are compelled to inquire what obstacles lie in their way; what the world will think; who will oppose, and censure; who will or will not give them votes; and, if Ministers of the Gospel, whether their doctrines will, or will not, be popular, and whether their reproofs will be borne, or resented. They bend to every breeze; and by a blast, of no great violence, are overthrown. All these wretched hindrances you will escape.

With a steady eye marking only your duty, you will proceed in a straight, and firm course to perform it. The mountain of difficulty before you will regularly become a plain. The God, whom you will thus faithfully serve, will wither the opposition of your enemies; and make the obstacles to your duty vanish; or if they are suffered to remain, will enable you steadily to ascend and triumph. How desirable will be such a progress! Desirable, because it is early begun, and therefore long continued; because it is freed from the usual difficulties of this embarrassed life; because it is only a career of victory. How much duty will you have done, when you come to a dying bed? What blessings will you have been to mankind? What *vessels of honour* and usefulness, *in the house of your master!* If you have devoted yourselves to the duties of Civil life; you will be able, with David, when your course is finished, to say, "I have behaved myself wisely in a perfect way." If Ministers of the Gospel, you may boldly declare to those, who have heard you, "I take you to record, this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Thirdly. *Because it is Safe.*

In the possession of this independence you will be safe *from the domination of your own Passions*: for the subjugation of passion is a part of its nature. A weak, wavering man is continually galled and jaded by his passions; particularly, by his love of applause, and popularity, his fear of censure, and his dread of being alone, either in his opinions or practices. In this manner he is perpetually driven from what he thinks right, and goaded into what he knows to be wrong. You, on the contrary, in the possession of this high attribute will lay your passions at your feet; and only call them in, as servants, to your aid, as you find occasion may require. What a mighty deliverance will even this be.

The wavering man, also, will be perpetually solicited *by a thousand Tempters*; because they expect him to yield of course: and every temptation will find him unprepared, feeble, and defenceless. Few tempters, on the contrary, will approach *you*; because they will know, that they cannot prevail. Who would have offered a bribe to Aristides, have solicited Washington to betray his country; or have asked Paul to pervert the truth? The temptations also, which actually assail you, will find you guarded at all points.

You will not enter upon this war without money, without arms, without soldiers; but *with twenty thousand will go forth to meet him, that cometh against you with ten thousand.* What is more, infinitely more, you will be watched by the Omniscient eye, and protected by the Almighty hand, of God. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," is a promise, in a peculiar sense appropriated to Christians. *determined to do their duty.*

Nor will you find, at all, the *same vexations, and embarrassments, from your fellow-men.* Few persons think of contending against the public conduct of the Legislator, or the Magistrate, who is believed from principle faithfully, and firmly, to do what he thinks right. The Minister, who is acknowledged to adhere undauntedly to the truth of the Scriptures, will be quietly permitted to preach whatever he believes to be truth.

Fourthly. *Because it is Honourable.*

Look back upon the history of man; and tell me who, in your own opinion, have been the honourable members of the human race. Is one warping, wavering man in the number? Among all those, who have sacrificed their own judgment, and consciences, to the opinion of others, to the dread of censure, to the love of popularity and applause, to the desire of advancement, to the lust for office, is there a single Washington; a Chatham; an Alfred; a Gustavus; an Aristides; a Leonidas; a Judas Maccabeus; an Apostle; a Prophet; or a Patriarch? How infinitely different is this conduct from that of the Saviour of Mankind; who set his face as a flint, against the opposing opinions, slanders, and persecutions, of the whole nation, in which he was born; and sealed the truth of his testimony on the accursed tree. *Glory, and honour, in the supreme and immortal sense, belong only to those, who patiently or as it is in the original, firmly and perseveringly, continue in well-doing.* These are the men, whom in your consciences you respect and reverence. These are the men, who are revered by mankind; who receive here, and throughout eternal ages will receive hereafter, *the honour, which cometh from God only.* These are *the greatest,* while wavering Christians, although really possessing the christian character, will be *the least, in the kingdom of heaven;* and while few, very few, among all those, who yield themselves to mental bondage, will ever be found in the regions of life.

Fifthly. *Because it is Delightful.*

All the observations, which have been already made, illustrate this important truth. The character, which is safe, useful, and honourable, cannot but be pleasant to the possessor. This, however, is far from being all. The Independence, which I am urging, is the direct source of peace in the soul; the peace derived from an approving conscience, and an approving God; the beginning, and the end, of all sincere enjoyment. In its retrospective views it finds a multitude of objects on which its eye fastens with delight, and over which Conscience sheds a perpetual sunshine. Its prospects, its future designs, still brighter and better with continually increasing excellence, are a regular progress in the high way of holiness towards the paradise of God. Temptations may betide; dangers may multiply; and sufferings may threaten: but the Christian hero, *possessing his soul* in the fortitude of the Gospel, will be able to say, "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy." Secure of the smiles of God, on death he will look with serenity; and to the world beyond the grave with hope, which maketh not ashamed. There he will see a divine reward prepared for him; a crown of glory, at the sight of which earthly diadems are changed into dross and dirt: and there he will be welcomed to the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, as a glorious addition to their number, and their joys.

My Young Friends, You have begun life with many blessings, promises, and hopes. Your behaviour, while under my care, has strongly recommended you to my affection. You go into the world with my best wishes, and my fervent prayers. May the Lord God be with you and make your way through life prosperous! May he enable you to be *strong, and very courageous, to do all the words of his law, and not to turn from it to the right hand, or to the left.* In this way you will find life a blessing to yourselves. In this way you will be blessings to your fellow men. In this way *the rod and staff of the good Shepherd* will support you, as you *pass through the valley of the shadow of death*: and in this way you will ascend to immortal glory beyond the grave.

SERMON XXIX.

ON DOING GOOD.

PREACHED TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE BACCALAUREATE
IN 1816.



GALATIANS vi. 10.

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men; especially unto them, who are of the household of faith.

THIS passage of Scripture is founded upon that, which immediately precedes it, "And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due time we shall reap, if we faint not." That, which we may be expected in this case to reap, is mentioned in the 8th verse; viz. *life everlasting*. The original language at the commencement of the 9th verse is. Το δε καλον ποιουντες, μη εκκαωμεν: literally, "While we are doing that, which is morally excellent, beautiful, or lovely; let us not flag:" "let us not lose our energy, nor become feeble and spiritless in our exertions." On the contrary, let us always be vigorous, and animated, in the performance of this great duty. The original words rendered, *let us do good*, are εργαζομεθα το αγαθον: "let us labour that which is good," i. e. "let us do it with the diligence and exertion, with which industrious men labour in their ordinary business." From a comparison of this phraseology we learn, that that, which is to be done by us, is not only to be beneficial to mankind. but is to be done with such a disposition as will render the performance morally excellent and lovely in the sight of God; and that it is our duty to labour in this employment with firm resolution, and unremitting energy.

This duty we are required to perform, *especially*, towards *those, who are of the household of faith*. For this part of the injunction, obvious, and ample reasons may without any difficulty be alleged. But the time will not permit me to consider, either the reasons, or the injunction itself. I shall, therefore, confine my observations to the general precept in the text; which requires us

To do good unto all men, as we have opportunity.

The first care of every man is undoubtedly to be employed, in all ordinary cases, upon himself; and the next, upon his family. The reasons are plain and decisive. God has committed these objects peculiarly to *him*. To them he can do more good than to any others; as they are always within his reach; as their wants are more immediately and perfectly known to him; and as he can supply them more easily, more uniformly, and more effectually, than he can those of any other persons. It is hardly necessary to observe, that what is true of their wants is equally true of all their other interests. In addition to this it is to be remembered, that, unless he perform the duty here specified, it will never be performed: for his fellow-men will never take the charge of it upon themselves.

But, beside this great and indispensable duty of all men, *it is in the power of all to do some, and of most to do much, good to others, who are not their immediate connections*. The performance of this duty I consider as the great object of the apostle in the text; an object, worthy of his commission, of his inspiration, and of the glorious Being, by whom he was inspired.

What *St. Paul* thought it proper thus solemnly to enjoin upon all, to whom the Gospel should come, I shall endeavour to impress upon the minds of my audience; and, particularly, upon the youths, for whom the present Discourse is especially intended.

You are now, my young friends, about to take your leave of the Seminary, in which you have received your principal education, and the principal means of enabling you to live usefully and honourably in the world. I have heretofore given you many instructions, kindly, and sincerely, I know, and as I hope usefully to you. The last, which as a body you will ever receive from me, I am to give to you now. If they are not profitable to you, I intend, that it shall not be my fault. Your past behaviour, while under my instruction, merits my cordial commendation; and for-

bids me to entertain a single doubt that the instructions, which I now address to you, will be received with candour and good-will. I hope they will not be forgotten.

The first class of benefits, which you are required to confer upon your fellow-men, and which will ordinarily be more in your power than any other, *is formed of such, as are naturally involved in the peculiar employments, to which you will hereafter devote yourselves.* These to an observing man will usually be obvious; and by all men will be acknowledged to be indispensable parts of your duty. Whether you betake yourselves to the pursuit of Agriculture, Commerce, Law, Medicine, or Theology; whether you are found in private or public stations; it will be admitted by each of you, that the business, to which you are thus addicted, ought to be performed faithfully by yourselves, and usefully to others. But this class of beneficial efforts I shall not insist upon at the present time. My chief object is to urge upon you a beneficence, collateral to this; a beneficence, which will be suggested to you almost daily by passing events; which it will be in your power to render without neglecting your professional duties; which in single cases will often be of more importance than such of those duties, as can be performed within an equal period; which, united, may be justly considered as of inestimable value; and which on all these accounts is indispensably required of you by your Maker. Let me now point out to you some of the ways, in which you may advantageously exert this beneficence towards your fellow-men.

As a preliminary to all the observations, which will be made in this discourse, I shall suppose you to be established in some useful business; which will furnish you with competent means of subsistence, and in the prosecution of which, if faithful to yourselves, you will acquire in some good degree reputation and influence. In this situation let me urge upon you, not merely as generous and honourable conduct, but as a duty to God and to mankind, from which you cannot be released, *such encouragement of well-behaved young men, as they may need, and as it may be in your power to furnish them without too serious inconvenience to yourselves.* Young men, at their entrance into life, are apt to feel all the difficulties, really involved in their circumstances; and usually many

more, which are chiefly imaginary. These, however, operate on their minds with the same force, as if they were real. The field is to them new and unlimited; and the objects, which it contains, are numerous, and for that reason perplexing. Naturally, they fasten their eyes on those which are forbidden. By the number of these objects, they are perplexed: by their nature, they are disheartened. During a period to come, of greater or less length, many of *you*, should Providence prolong your lives, may not improbably find yourselves in this very situation. Very many others have been in it before you; and by the blessing of God have surmounted the obstacles, which lay in their way to success. This extensive experience proves, that they are less formidable, and ought to be less discouraging, than you will imagine them. When you shall have triumphed over them all; let me exhort you to remember the anxiety and despondence, which you felt in these circumstances: and from your own sufferings learn to feel, and to relieve, the sufferings of such as come after you. To be the friend of young men is to sustain one of the most respectable characters, and to act one of the most useful parts, ordinarily within the reach of a person, even of distinguished worth. It is to comfort the heart, sustain and invigorate the energy, multiply the blessings, and expand the usefulness, of many youths, fitted, both by their endowments and their dispositions, to become benefactors to mankind. At the same time the good, to be done, may be accomplished in most cases with very little self-denial or inconvenience. Often, advice may be all that is necessary: not unfrequently, countenance: and at times, sympathy. Should other aid be needed; he, who communicates it, will be the more deserving; and enjoy the satisfaction regularly springing from pure beneficence.

Another mode of doing good, which will be extensively in your power, is to *befriend Education; particularly that, which is furnished by parochial schools.* On this copious subject I can only give hints.

It is proverbially acknowledged, that, independently of the operations of the Divine Spirit, the character of men is chiefly formed by the discipline of childhood: and in our own country a great part of this discipline is furnished by parochial schools. New England justly claims the reputation of having distinguished

herself by an attention to these Institutions, which, to say the least, is uncommon; and no part of New England, perhaps, more than this State. Yet it is unquestionably true, that our own system is in many respects lamentably imperfect. Often, this is in various particulars the character of the instructors; and always, as I believe, of the scheme of instruction. Even the modes, in which reading, writing, and spelling, are customarily taught, are extremely defective; and seem rather to have been the result of accident than of thought. The time, spent in learning to read and write badly, is from twice to six times what would be necessary to learn both well. The waste might easily be applied to the attainment of other knowledge, confessedly of great value.

It cannot be denied, that this subject is of very serious importance: since it must affect, to a considerable extent, the well-being of the whole rising generation. Comparatively, however, it is insignificant. Moral and religious instruction, an object of far higher consequence, there is reason to fear, is often either wholly neglected, or administered with such carelessness, as is nearly allied to absolute neglect; or is given so erroneously and imperfectly, as to be little better, and sometimes perhaps worse, than none. There are undoubtedly cases, widely and happily different from all these; but, it is to be feared, they are far fewer than a good man would wish.

Were every schoolmaster to comprehend the extent and importance of his office; were he at the same time a Christian; or would he even act as a Christian; and were the scheme of instruction to be formed on the principles, taught in the Gospel; he would become a preacher of righteousness to his little flock; and his instructions hopeful means of their piety. To parents, who trained up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, he would become in this case a powerful aid; and to those, who did not, the best of all substitutes. In this case every child in the community, who was sent to school, would in a good degree receive a religious education; and be hopefully prepared to be virtuous here, and happy hereafter.

The change, which would be made in the character of the next generation, were a complete reformation to take place in both particulars, would, I suspect, be greater than the most sanguine man can be easily induced to believe. To effectuate such

a change, what labours ought to be grudged? Who, that has influence, can excuse himself from attempting it? Here, my young friends, is a field of usefulness opened to you, vast, deeply interesting to every wise and good man, and inviting every exertion, which in consistence with your other duties you will be able to make. Let me exhort you here to employ all those efforts, which, within these limits, the importance of the subject plainly requires: and, let me add, you will become benefactors to your country on no common scale.

The utility of *instituting Sunday Schools* is now, and but for unfortunate prejudices would always have been, universally acknowledged. Wherever they are necessary, (and they are necessary in many more places than we are ready to suspect.) all the arguments plead for the same strenuous exertions to promote and improve them, which can be urged in behalf of others.

Another duty, to which I exhort you, is *to allay the prejudices, and the heat, of party spirit in your native country*. I have always taught you, that you are under high obligations to judge in every case for yourselves; that you are bound to judge conformably to argument and evidence; and that for your use, or abuse, of this privilege you must hereafter give an account to your Creator. Judge for yourselves concerning political, as well as other, subjects. But, whatever political opinions you may form, it will be impossible for you, unless destitute of candour and honest investigation, not to discern, that the prejudices, the fervour, and the bitterness, of party spirit are incapable of vindication. I may be permitted to think differently from my neighbour; but I am not permitted to hate him, nor to quarrel with him, merely because he thinks differently from me.

It will probably be allowed by most men, that our countrymen have spent a sufficient time in hostilities against each other. We have entertained as many unkind thoughts, uttered as many bitter speeches, called each other by as many hard names, and indulged as much unkindness and malignity; as might satisfy our worst enemies, and as certainly ought to satisfy us. From all these efforts of ill-will we have not derived the least advantage. A sober man, taking even a transient retrospect of the affairs of our country, will perceive with a mere glance of the eye, that the influence of these contentions has, from their dawn to the present

hour, been only malignant; and that its sole consequence to our country has been a tendency to place it in a state of regular suffering, and decline. In the mean time the peace of society, of neighbourhoods, of congregations, and even of families and churches, has been often disturbed, and sometimes broken up. Friends and brothers have ceased to be friends and brothers; and professing Christians have dishonoured the religion which they professed.

It is unnecessary to consider any longer the painful side of this subject. It is impossible, that these things should be justified to the conscience of man, unless seared as with an hot iron. It is certainly impossible, that they should be justified before God: for they are all gross violations of the great law of love, by which he governs the universe. They cannot be followed by his blessing: they *have been followed* only by his curse.

When you shall have been fixed in your future business, your places of residence, and in the influence, which, if you are willing to comply with the injunction in the text, it is rationally hoped and believed, you will obtain; it will be in your power, at least within a little circle around you, to mitigate, I hope it will be in your power to exterminate, these deplorable evils. You may, perhaps, be discouraged from the attempt by the knowledge, that they have hitherto raged without intermission, and without any appearance of decay. Be not disheartened by this consideration. It is alleged in vain. None have tried to assuage them: or, if attempts have been made, they have been the feeble, heartless efforts of sloth and discouragement. Were exertions of this nature adopted with wisdom, and made in earnest; the effects, I am persuaded, would be greater and better, than most even among sanguine men can be induced to believe. Families, neighbourhoods, and even larger societies, both secular and ecclesiastical, would, I am satisfied, assume a new face; become more candid, just and friendly; and beyond measure be more happily united in doing good to each other.

Among the dreadful consequences of party spirit it is one, and obviously the most dreadful, that it forbids the progress of Religion. Men are so engaged, under the influence of this spirit, by the objects which especially excite it, as to have no time even for the serious consideration, much less for the earnest promotion, of

others. Were this not the fact; the spirit itself is hostile to every thing sacred; to Religion, to the soul, and to its Maker. "The fruit of righteousness," says St. James, "is sown in peace of them that make peace." The seed, from which this Divine fruit springs, is sown, with either success or hope, only in a state of peace; i. e. in a state of quiet, extending through the little circle in which it is sown; of domestic, neighbourly, and congregational, peace; where those immediately concerned are peaceful, and friendly to each other. The character of those among whom, and of those by whom, it is sown; must be the same. Otherwise, good as the seed is, brought as it was from heaven, and productive as it naturally is of immortal fruit; it will be lost on the way side, or on stony ground, or scattered on wastes, covered with thorns and briars. To the accomplishment of this deplorable issue every party zealot contributes his full share.

I am well aware, that your best and wisest efforts, even when commended to the acceptance and blessing of God by the incense of daily, faithful, fervent prayer, may nevertheless fail. Those, among whom you labour, may have so long and so outrageously provoked the indignation of the Most High, as to be given over to judicial blindness. He may say of them, as he said of old, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." Should this be the melancholy fact; you will still find ample rewards for all your efforts, and for all your self-denial, in this labour of love. You will obtain the approbation of your consciences; that peace of mind, that delightful sunshine on the world within, which springs from every honest endeavour to do good. You will secure the approbation of your Maker. "Blessed," said the Saviour of mankind, "are the peace makers: for they shall be called the children of God."

The claims of the poor, as an object of general contemplation, are probably admitted by all men in all Christian countries. Certainly they are admitted *here*. From the injunctions, commendations, and promises, given in the Scriptures concerning the alleviation of their distresses, it is certain, that this duty holds a high rank, and that the performance of it is indispensable, in the estimation of God.

It is one thing to admit claims: it is another to satisfy them. The greatest hindrance to the adequate relief of the poor in this

country, I suspect, is not covetousness. This undoubtedly has an extensive, as well as malignant, influence. But the chief misfortunes, if I mistake not, are, the ignorance which prevails of the situation, particularly of the necessities and sufferings of those, who are the proper objects of pecuniary charity; and the want of a well devised system of relief. Formerly the persons of this class were so few, and so well known; that their sufferings could hardly be concealed, or mistaken. Now, though few in comparison with the same class in other countries, they are multiplied every where; and in some places have become numerous. Of course, new measures are demanded. The first thing, to be done, is to learn their real situation. This is a task, which belongs to every body, and therefore is done by nobody. The next is to point out the manner, in which their wants may be best supplied.

The best of all charitable efforts for this purpose *is to furnish the poor with means, and modes, wherever it can be done, of supporting themselves.* But for such an effort, property, intelligence, and attentive consideration, are all indispensable. The poor have neither. They must all, therefore, be furnished by others. By taking upon yourselves this interesting and beneficial employment, and pursuing it to its proper issue, you will render an important service to mankind; obtain the approbation of your own consciences; and secure the promise of a blessing from your Maker.

Formerly the children of the poor were, under the authority of law, regularly apprenticed to farmers, mechanics, and others, throughout most parts of New England; and were thus by a proper education, and the acquisition of industrious, sober, frugal habits, enabled, instead of becoming burdens and nuisances to the community, to support themselves, and to acquire property and character. Whoever shall revive the regular execution of this law will confer an invaluable benefit upon his country; and in all probability preserve a multitude of his fellow-creatures from ruin in this world, and in that which is to come.

There are many other objects, to which if the occasion would permit, I might advantageously direct your attention; as furnishing many opportunities of doing good to your fellow-men; such as the promotion of useful industry, and well directed enterprise, in the various business of man; of frugality and moderation in

living; the accumulation of valuable books in Social libraries; the advancement of education in its higher branches; and particularly of the interests of this Seminary, entitled by the benefits which it has conferred upon you to your grateful, and by its general importance, to your vigorous, support. But the time obliges me to pass by these interesting themes of discussion; and to devote the remainder of my discourse to an object of still higher importance; *the promotion of Religion*. In consecrating your labours to this paramount object of every wise and good man it is not easy to say, or conceive, how useful to mankind may be your beneficence. The modes, in which this mighty purpose may be accomplished, are too many, and too various, to be enumerated on such an occasion, as the present. Some of them, however, I will endeavour to point out to you with as much brevity, as the nature of the case will permit.

The first of these in order, and to you of the highest moment, is *that you become religious yourselves.*

Some of you have already, I trust, assumed this character. What reason can be given, why it should not be assumed by you all? Here you have lived, as equals, in harmony and friendship; have stood upon the same level; have pursued the same studies; and indulged the same hopes of future usefulness, and prosperity. You are all about to enter into the same world. Why should you not act in it with the same beneficial efficacy? You are all bound to eternity; and are travelling in the path, which will conduct you to the final recompense of reward. Why should you not receive the same reward; endless happiness and glory, in the heaven of heavens?

The value of this attainment no numbers can estimate, and no imagination conceive. At present it will be sufficient to observe, that it will be the essential means of enabling you to perform all the duties, and to do all the good, which has been urged, or which will be urged, in the progress of this discourse. Without it there is the utmost reason to fear, that the business will not be begun. Should it be begun; it will be executed in a lame and unhappy manner. Without it you may indeed move in this mighty concern; but you will move as an automaton moves; and be destitute of a living principle.

Of such a principle I will, however, suppose you possessed at

the period, all along referred to in this Discourse ; and will urge you, under its influence, and control, *to recommend Religion to those, around you, in your conversation.* A clergyman of high respectability once informed me, that, after he had received a license to preach, and was on the point of parting with his theological Instructor, the venerable man, taking him by the hand, said, “ My young friend, wherever you are, endeavour to drop a word for God.” Let me urge upon you this excellent advice.

There is much conversation concerning Religion, which ought not to exist. Whenever we enter into this field, to display ourselves ; to exhibit our knowledge, our zeal, our humility, or our piety ; it is questionable whether any good is ever done ; and certain, that we do much harm.

But much conversation concerning Religion, which ought to exist, does not. When we converse on this subject with a sincere design to recommend it to others, and to persuade them to become pious, it is scarcely possible, that we shall do any harm ; and absolutely certain, that we shall do much good. Under the influence of such a design, we shall choose the proper occasions, and converse with the proper persons, in the proper manner, for this end ; and may confidently hope for the blessing of God upon our endeavours.

Should you, happily, be attentive to this duty, you will find cases, daily occurring in the private interview, at the fire-side, and in the social circle, of performing it with the best hopes of doing good. A single sentence, nay a single hint, has not unfrequently issued in the eternal life of the person, to whom it was addressed. Think what it is to “ convert a sinner from the error of his way, to save a soul from death, and to cover a multitude of sins.”

You will not believe, that I suppose it proper for you *to force such conversation upon others.* This would defeat the end. Equally would it be defeated by assuming an air of authority over them ; by austerity ; by moroseness ; by gloominess ; by a disputatious or importunate character ; or even by unfortunate awkwardness in the mode of communication. It is *the word, fitly spoken, which I urge upon you,* and this, as the wisest of all men,

correctly translated, has said, "is like citrons of gold in baskets of silver."

But beautiful and valuable as such words are, they are certainly much less frequently spoken on this great subject, than every good man must wish. Diffidence; the fear of giving pain; the fear of acting with impropriety, of being censured, or of being thought of unfavourably; or, what is more than all, the want of a fixed, habitual determination to perform this duty; prove fatal hindrances in our way. Let them not be hindrances to you.

What you thus endeavour to diffuse in your conversation, invariably *labour to promote by your example*. This will seal the truth of what you say; lend a reality, a loveliness, a charm, to the cause which you recommend; and give an eloquence, a persuasiveness, to your lips, which no master of rhetoric could impart.

As another most important means of doing good, I exhort you *to make the support of Ministers of the Gospel a settled, and commanding, purpose of your lives*.

The Ministry of the Gospel, as you well know, is an institution of Christ himself; an institution acknowledged by Christians of every class, and in every country. It is an institution, absolutely indispensable to the prosperity of the Church, and of the Religion by which it was formed. God, I know, and all men know, who know any thing of his character, can with infinite ease sanctify and save men without the instrumentality either of Ministers, or Bibles. But this is not the plan, which he has announced in his Word; nor, where Ministers and Bibles can be obtained, pursued in his Providence. He has always honoured his own institutions; has declared himself jealous for them; and has taught us in a manner equally forcible, solemn and awful, that he will honour no other. Nadab and Abihu perished for departing from one of them. Those, who neglect, or depart, from one of them at the present time, will not prosper. "Faith," saith St. Paul, "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. How shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Such were the views of the great Apostle of the Gentiles concerning this subject;

and, what is infinitely more, such is the decision of the Spirit of God.

The support of Ministers includes two things; *adequate means of living*; and *that countenance and encouragement, which every man may give in his own sphere, but which is especially to be looked for from persons of weight and influence in society.*

With respect to the former of these, every man, even of moderate character, who pays any serious attention to the subject, will be obliged to confess, that our countrymen, to a great extent, have customarily *withholden more than is meet.* To no class of men has justice been more extensively denied, than to Ministers of the Gospel. There are, I acknowledge, honourable exceptions to this remark. I wish the number were greater.

Our ancestors, whom we are apt to consider as less enlightened, and particularly as less liberal, than ourselves, far excelled us in just views, and in liberal contributions, respecting this object: and, for more than one hundred years after the colonization of the country commenced, Ministers, as a body, were much more liberally supported than they have been within the last fifty years. The equitable support of a Minister includes, beside the mere decent maintenance of himself, and his family, sufficient provision for a proper education of his children; the means of that hospitality which is required of him in the Scriptures; and such provision for sickness, old age, and those whom he may leave behind him, as is usually and reasonably expected by other men. I need not say how considerable a part of this support is customarily withheld in our own country; nor, that to furnish it is a duty, from which no congregation can be excused before him, who hath ordained, that "those, who preach the Gospel, shall live of the Gospel."

Very erroneous apprehensions concerning this subject have been generally entertained by most of our countrymen. Few of them even calculate the expense of living on a salary; and, therefore, they cannot be induced to believe, that it can be what it really is. It is time, that juster views were formed concerning this subject; and juster measures adopted. But, if such a reformation is ever to take place, it must be accomplished by the good sense, the influence, and the efforts, of men distinguished for intelligence and worth.

Such men, also, *must uphold Ministers by their countenance, their friendship, and the respect, which they render to their persons, office, and ministration.* No man will have a happy influence upon society, who is not respected by it; and no man will ordinarily be respected by persons in inferior stations, when they see him slighted, or even neglected, by their superiors.

Among all the means of doing good to your fellow-men there is not one, which, within your immediate sphere of action, promises more certain, or more important, benefits than that which is here recommended.

There are many other ways, in which this great purpose may be advantageously pursued. But they must be left to your own consideration, and to that course of Providence, which from time to time will present to your view both them. and the means by which they will be accomplished. All, that with propriety I can now say concerning them, is; fix in your minds a regular course of attention to them, just views of their nature and importance, and a steadfast habit of cheerfully employing in their promotion your property, and your exertions.

The present day is a period of wonders; and among all those, which it has brought to pass. *the Charitable efforts for the salvation of men which have spread over a great part of the Christian world, are certainly the most astonishing.* Within the last twenty years a new order of things has arisen in the spiritual providence of God; in several respects more wonderful than any. which has taken place since the Apostolic age. The minds of Christians, and, as we have reason to believe, of many others, have been turned in a very extraordinary manner to the great business of promoting the salvation of their fellow-men. In this work, the numbers engaged, their zeal, their liberality, their piety, their charity, their perseverance, are novelties, which have outrun all example, and all expectation.

In the mean time, the business has been taken up with system, and forecast. It has not been the result of momentary impulse; a flame kindled on the altar of passion, or enthusiasm. It is the steady sunshine of the orb, which enlightens the universe; not illuminating only, but warming, cheering, quickening, all things in its way. It is an energy, derived from heaven; and proving its

origin by the unchanging activity with which it proceeds, and the benevolent and divine effects of which it is the source. For this mighty purpose an immense number of Associations have been formed in Great Britain, and on the continent of Europe, in the United States, in Asia; and at least four or five in Africa; one of them a Society of Hottentots. Ethiopia, the general representative of that degraded continent in prophecy, has thus begun in a marvellous manner to "stretch forth her hands."

By these Societies, innumerable religious and other useful books have been distributed; a vast number of schools erected; half a million of children educated in the most necessary knowledge, and not a small number of adults; about three hundred Missionaries sent out to preach the Gospel; and more good done than has been done with the same labour and expense, since the Reformation.

In the year 1804, a small number of highly respectable inhabitants of Great Britain formed themselves into a Society for the purpose of printing, and distributing the Bible without note or comment. The wisdom, benevolence, and piety, of the Institution recommended it to the respect, and attachment of Christians, of every denomination, in a degree unprecedented. Auxiliary Societies, either to the parent Institution, or to its grand design, began speedily to rise in every part not only of the British Empire, but of the Christian world. The number, at the present time, is probably between seven and eight hundred; of which one hundred and fifty have been formed in our own country; and nine, at least, are National Societies.

The *transactions of the British and Foreign Bible Society* are not less wonderful than *the multiplication of its auxiliaries*. During the first year, its whole expenditure was less than \$3,100; and during the twelfth year more than \$460,000. During the twelve years it has expended upwards of two millions; and distributed 1,557,973 Bibles and Testaments. All this has been done by voluntary contributions.

Nobles, princes, kings, and emperors, have been proud to have their names enroled as friends, and patrons, of this evangelical Institution: while those of inferior orders, even peasants and servants, nay little children, have crowded around the charity box

with their humbler, but not less liberal, nor less honourable offerings.

To the labours of this mighty Association, a vast multitude of others of different descriptions have added theirs; all directed to the same end; all advancing the same glorious purpose. The world is assuming an Evangelical aspect. Piety is wonderfully prevailing; Christians are rapidly increasing in their numbers, and in their purity. A multitude of Heathen, and a number of Mohammedans, and even of Jews have become converts. From ten thousand hills prayer wafts its incense to the heavens. From millions of hands flow the life-giving streams of beneficence. The Scriptures have reached the ship, and the cottage; and have shed the light of life, and opened the gates of immortality, in the mine, and the dungeon.

What is, perhaps, even more wonderful than any of the facts which have been mentioned, the Catholicism of the Gospel has begun powerfully and extensively to prevail; and that in a manner, unparalleled since the primitive days of the Church. Christians in great numbers have begun to understand the difference between "tithing mint, anise, and cummin, and the weightier matters of the law." "In Hindostan," says the eloquent and excellent Buchanan, "we have no Episcopalians, no Presbyterians, no Baptists, no Methodists; but many Christians." The day is on the wing, when Christendom will in this respect resemble Hindostan. Christians will be multiplied; sects will lose their bigotry, and their mutual alienation.

To the great cause, which has been specified, you, my young friends, will be summoned by your Maker to yield throughout life your hearts, and your hands. To contribute to the salvation of their fellow-men is fast becoming a part of the regular business of all classes of society. Peculiarly is this true concerning men, enlightened and influential. Opposition will indeed be made to it. Avarice, pride, voluptuousness, bigotry, enthusiasm, superstition, will arrange all their hosts in battle array against the Lord, and against his anointed. But "He that sitteth in the heavens, shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision." In all the attempts against this glorious progress of charity, those, who have

made them, have regularly been foiled. The same defeat will attend all those, which will be made hereafter. The tide of beneficence will roll on with an irresistible power; and all its opposers will be put to shame. In this Divine work enlist yourselves under the banner of God, as good soldiers of Christ; not as occasional recruits, destined to temporary and desultory services; but as soldiers for life. Make it a part of your scheme of life to seize every opportunity for performing this exalted duty. "Occupy till your Lord comes." Put out all your talents on the richest usury; and at the great reckoning day you will be pronounced to have well done.

Among the Institutions, formed to accomplish this glorious beneficence, there is one, which claims a paramount interest. Wise and good men at length have seen with inexpressible satisfaction a *National Bible Society* established in our country; an Institution, formed on the best principles, and fitted to unite the efforts of all such men in promoting the glory of their Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and the salvation of their fellow-men. Here, it is believed, the energy of *American Christians* will centre in one common channel, and flow in a mighty stream of beneficence through the world. Lose no opportunity of employing your powers and means, to spread through this channel the Word of life to every region of darkness in other lands; and through every cottage, and cabin, in your own.

You will soon enter the eternal world. Live so here, that you may enter it with hope and joy. Which of you is willing to leave this world in terror; and make your appearance in that, in despair? Which of you can bear to be rejected at the last tribunal? Which of you can endure to cast his eyes through eternal ages, and see no good in store for himself? Which of you will not resolve to be a future companion of angels, and enrolled in the assembly of the first born? Which of you can give up his hopes of the celestial paradise for an endless residence in the blackness of darkness? As you would avoid this miserable destiny, go from this house with a final determination to *do good unto all men, as you have opportunity; especially to the household of faith.* You will not, indeed, even in this way *merit* the blessings of eternal life.

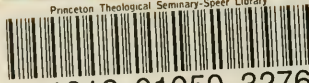
But he, who died that you might live, will certainly see, remember, and *reward, your labour of love.*

After the close of this week you will never meet again in the present world. May the Father of all mercies, and the God of all grace, in his infinite compassion grant, that you may next assemble at the right hand of the final Judge; and then, and forever, be united in "the bond of love" before the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; where to do good, and obtain good, will be your divine allotment throughout ages, which will know no end.

END OF VOL. I.

Brian

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01050 3276